

PlayStation 3 PS2 PSP 演劇端末

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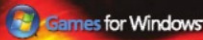
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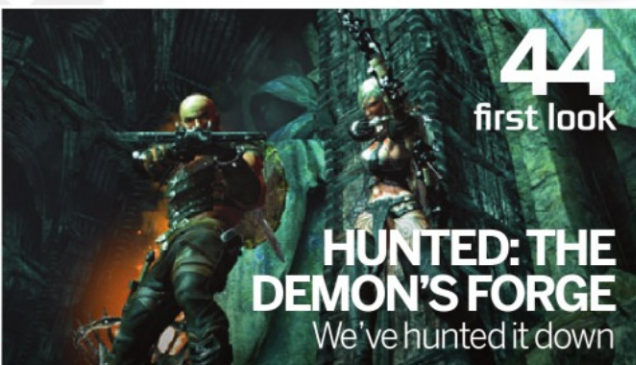
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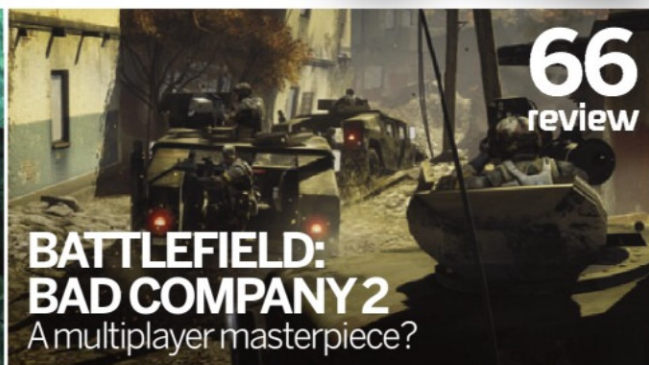
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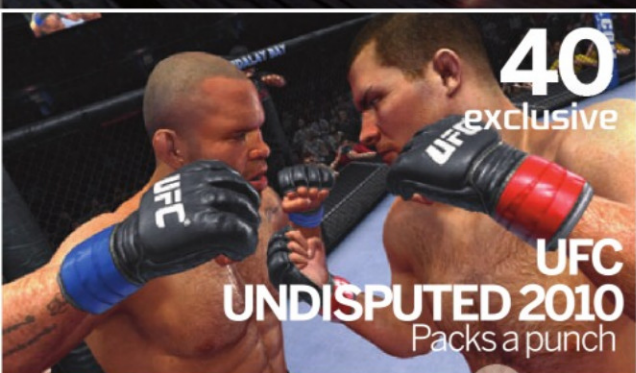
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PlayStation 3 PS2 PSP 演劇端末

Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

Blades Of Glory



They used to say that all the good games arrive at Christmas but, perhaps a little put off by the sheer retail might of *Modern Warfare 2* over the festive season, some of the

biggest hitters in the business have delayed their debuts until the first half of this year. And what a good tact to take as it makes for extra development time, bigger exposure and, most importantly, a wealth of exciting games at a time of the year when we're usually left scouring the

Experiences that couldn't be achieved on any other console

pre-owned section for something we may have missed out on.

In fact this month it feels like Christmas has come early (or late depending on your viewpoint) as we've had the pleasure of playing a host of games that are set to be bigger than Santa's waist line. Our cover feature *Red Dead Redemption* is a prime example. Naively labelled by some as *GTA* in the Wild West, Rockstar's latest project has so much more to offer and is truly a child of the next generation. Its unique

take on the past provides a true window into the future and is setting the bar very high for all other open-world adventure games that follow.

While *Red Dead* might come as a huge surprise to some, another game we've had in the office this month has been eagerly awaited now for three years and heralds the arrival of Kratos in his first and possibly last outing on PS3 – in his current incarnation anyway. The third instalment in the outstanding *God Of War* canon is looking to end the series in spectacular fashion and deliver an epic experience that just wasn't possible until now. Does it achieve its

godly goal? Read our review to find out. It's taken a little longer than Sony stalwarts might have liked but these two games alone act as prime examples of the PS3 coming into its own and truly delivering on promises made a few years back. Having played them I truly believe that these experiences could not have been replicated at any other time or on any other console. So saddle up and enjoy the ride. On PlayStation 3.

K. HENNESSEY Editor

contributors



Shaun Davis

Say hello and goodbye to Shaun, who is making his second and final appearance in **Play**. We're pretty sure it's his last anyway, as he's leaving

Imagine Publishing for pastures new. This is especially emotional for **Play**, as he's become a sort of adopted son for Keith, with whom he lives. Keith says he will miss seeing Shaun in his vest and pants.



Tom Hopkins

Tom wasn't around for us to ask what he'd been doing this month, so we were forced to ask someone else, who told us that he'd been chasing ice cream

vans, barking at the postman and pooping on lampposts. Someone must have thought we said 'dog' instead of 'Tom', or maybe he just leads a rather mysterious life we didn't know about.



Jonathan Gordon

At the time of writing Jon is in London living like a rock star. He won't be getting out of bed 'til four in the afternoon today, then he'll crack open

a bottle of Jack Daniels and go downstairs to the hotel reception area, where he will make selections from a crowd of young girls that has gathered there to offer their bodies to him. After that, sound check.

the PLAY promise

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NEWS

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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UFC president fires barbs at EA



I DON'T SEE much point in change for change's sake, but I hear that it can sometimes be as good as a holiday. There are certainly a lot of changes coming to the PS3 in the coming year and plenty

coming to **Play**, too. You'll notice this issue that there are a few things new or different about the news section and you'll see even more coming and going in the coming months. You should let us know what you think by heading over to play-mag.co.uk/forum and posting your thoughts in our magazine feedback thread. It's always good to get an impression of what you guys like or dislike about the mag.

Anyway, change is afoot and not the small kind. For a start the face of online multiplayer has been changed by the release of **MAG**, but stalwarts of the FPS genre seem unimpressed as our lead story investigates. Dana White, president of UFC, doesn't change much and remains unimpressed by EA's **MMA** title on page 10. Meanwhile EA Sports' Peter Moore is preparing for the big changes that 3D technology will bring to watching sports on TV and playing its videogame interpretations and Relentless is changing its mind about pricing for **Blue Toad Murder Files** by making *Episode 3* free. All this and more discussed in this issue.

News Editor, Jonathan Gordon



"I think we'd be a bit mental to give a game away for free if our sales weren't that good, because we would be losing even more money"
— Jade Tidy, producer **Blue Toad Murder Files**, page 12



YOUR SAY

Can MAG change online gaming?

I don't think so, but I hope I'm wrong. Zipper Interactive have been really ambitious here, and being a small part of a much larger battle is exciting, but too many developers are going down the route of *COD*, trying to copy what they've done — **the bossman**

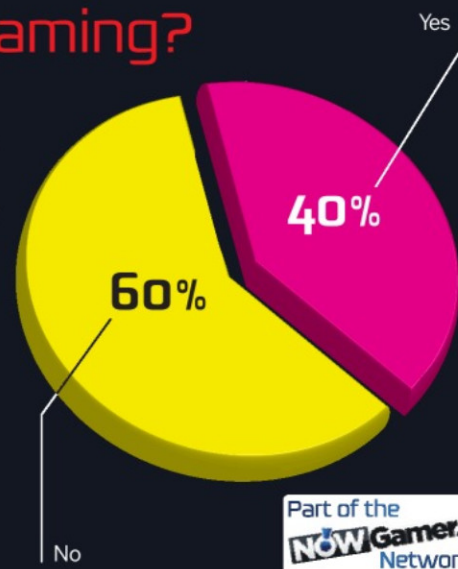
I think in the end it comes down to the player. They did a good job creating the game to be played as a team — **Mr healey**

I don't really think it would revolutionise FPSs because maybe in the first two weeks there may be 256 players but after that the numbers will probably start to dwindle, making the game's number one feature (the 256-player games) useless — **skrudge7**

It boasts an incredible amount of players but I can't see it being much more than an average game — **Dynamite Dan**

MAG will definitely revolutionise online play simply because of how many players can go online against each other. So far no other console can match the 200-plus player count for an FPS game — **kev schmit**

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SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

Shooter vets question MAG player numbers

In the wake of the release of Sony's massive shooter *MAG*, veteran online multiplayer developers have called into question whether the 256 players per game in Zipper Interactive's exclusive shooter is actually making the game more fun to play. Both DICE, the maker of the highly esteemed and successful *Battlefield* series, and Splash Damage, whose first PS3 shooter *Brink* is already receiving acclaim, have said smaller numbers of players is the way to go if you want to create an inclusive and fun shooter experience.

Many had thought that *MAG*'s 256 players could be a revolutionary step into the future of online console shooters, but that doesn't appear to be the case. Those with a little more experience simply aren't buying into it. "I don't think it is necessary, but whatever works for them, whatever works for their experience – that's really cool," *Bad Company 2* producer Gordon Van Dyke told us. "We've looked at how many players we can push it to but the problem that you run into with a lot of games is that when they have so many players you have to force them to be separate, because it's really almost impossible right now... if you could ever let 128 players or 256 meet up in one exact location your server would explode."

So clearly as a technical feat Zipper's rivals are impressed, but what of the gameplay? Splash Damage made its name producing the *Enemy Territory* games based on *Quake* and *Wolfenstein*, but told us that its experience with these titles had shown large numbers weren't always the answer. "Probably the most important lesson learnt is that bigger isn't always better," *Brink* creative director Richard Ham admitted to us. "For *Brink*, we could have increased player counts even higher than we had with *Quake Wars*, but we decided early on that going for a more intimate

experience produced better gameplay for our type of shooter. That's why we're an eight-versus-eight game."

"It's about what's fun," agreed Van Dyke. "You can have 24, 32 players and if you design it well then the total amount of players isn't really what's important – it's the design with how many players instead." But it could go even further than that as the shape of the game itself can be lost with too many participants on the map at one time. Van Dyke believed that *Battlefield 1942* served as a strong example of where too many players spoiled the shooter broth.

"I played *1942* and you never had a server that went over 32 players," he explained, although the limit was 64. "Just because you can do it – we could throw in 64 players to our game, yeah, big deal – it is in all sense of the purpose a value change, but then you've completely destroyed the integrity and the experience of your game, so the experience is going to be crap. That's what it was on *1942* – when you played *1942* and you went over 32 players the whole server went to shit."

We want players to get connected with their team, and with the enemy, instead of being lost in a sea of replaceable players

For Splash Damage the 16-player limit is more than enough to create the kind of close-knit experience it's looking for. "We really want players to get connected with their team, and with the enemy, instead of being lost in a sea of replaceable players," was Ham's summary. And for his part Van Dyke believes chasing after big numbers is a distraction from just making an engaging game. "I think that when you have a lot of fun you forget about those back of the box numbers that you were hoping for."



Read More!
Check out our full
interviews with Dana
White and Neven
Dravinski at
[Play-Mag.co.uk/
interview](http://Play-Mag.co.uk/interview)

Speaking with Dana White, president of the Ultimate Fighting Championship organisation, in Las Vegas, he launched into a scathing and expletive-ridden rant about EA and its upcoming *EA Sports MMA* title. White has been vocal in the past about his thoughts regarding EA, who he claims turned down the opportunity to produce a licensed UFC game some years ago and are only interested now because it has proven lucrative.

"I think EA is the 'Johnny Come Lately', the 'me too' of the videogame business," White explained to us. "We talked to

because they saw some money in it," he added.

However, with the release of *EA Sports MMA*, the previously unchallenged *UFC* game from THQ has a game lurking in the shadows chasing after it. *UFC Undisputed 2010* will be arriving well in advance of its rival, which isn't expected until the end of the year, and despite his rhetoric White doesn't believe it poses much of a threat. "I don't think it's going to affect us at all," he said. "We're the brand and we started this sport, before they told us they're not interested in the sport and now they think they can make a better ****ing videogame? They don't even like this s**t! Forget it, they're in it for the money."

That may all seem like a lot of hot air, but for the development team having a firebrand like White around is a real source of motivation. "Our big advantage is that we have Dana White," *UFC Undisputed 2010* producer Neven Dravinski told us. "He demands excellence and having a guy like that around pushes us to be the best we can be and make the best game possible. The need to be number one permeates through his whole organisation and that extends to this game."

We talked to EA and this is what they said: 'It's not a real sport, those aren't real athletes and we would never make a game like that'

EA and I quote this is what they said: 'It's not a real sport, those aren't real athletes and we would never make a game like that.' But EA's tune began to change in recent months as it started to talk up the world of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) at various press events. White doesn't seem to think that there is any great coincidence in the timing. "Now we come out with a successful game and all of a sudden it's a real sport

White Wash

More words of wisdom from the UFC president

ON COMPLAINTS ABOUT characters in the game: "Have you seen how ugly my model is? I was up there complaining. I've had [fighters] moaning that their guy is too weak or too slow, trust me I've heard it all."

On cover star Brock Lesnar: "Lesnar is the heavyweight champion, he's one of the most recognisable guys in the world. People love him and hate him but what he's accomplished in such a short time is amazing."

On the impact of *UFC Undisputed 2009*: "It's such a great marketing tool. People all over the world are playing this game that have never seen UFC but as they're playing they are learning about the various submissions and holds as well as who the fighters are. That's why keeping it as real as possible is very important to us."

YOUR SAY

Subscriptions For Call Of Duty?

Would subs for COD 7 put you off buying it?

Activision's financials for the past year came in this month and as you might expect they were rosy, but it already has plans for making even more money in 2010. "If you think about the successes we have had in other categories on subscriptions, you can get a sense of the direction we want to take that franchise," Activision CEO Bobby Kotick told investors. Whether that means paying extra for additional content or a whole new subscriptions-based game remains to be seen, but our readers poll suggest it might not be treated with much support from fans.

I'm not worried to be honest, *COD 7* is nine months away and Activision haven't provided any details yet. If the sub is optional then I don't think that'll damage sales whatsoever – people will buy *COD* no matter what. The only thing that puts me off it is Treyarch – **Equinox1.0**

Don't pay, you get regular *COD 7*. Pay, you get OMEGA perks, 5x damage, and 3x health, plus 12 new guns, two cool new grenade types, and a free stick to play fetch with. Something like that? – **UberCool_UberGoff**

The actual multiplayer content would more than likely remain free, the subscription, as you guys have already said, would be for new weapons or other extras. If it were to happen, I think they'd still release the standard DLC to go alongside it for new maps, and the subscription for nice bonuses. I'd never pay for it, because they're ripping us off as it is with a *COD* game every year – **the bossman**

I enjoy playing *COD* and having a paid subscription would mean a vast reduction of cheaters who kill you in hardcore mode. People just wouldn't pay to cheat – **supermarioex**

One of the reasons people pay more for the PS3 is because you don't have to pay online fees. This will ruin that and could lose Sony some of its market. If *COD* feel like they need to increase their profit margins at the cost of its loyal customers then maybe they could have a ten-second ad at the start of each match instead. It seems fairer than paying again when you've already paid £40 to £50 for a game – **koppert79**

Yes: 70%

No: 30%

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● The likes of *FIFA*, *Madden* and *Fight Night* should look amazing in 3D.



MOORE BACKS 3D REVOLUTION

EA Sports will embrace 3D, but Pachter has doubts

Speaking to EA Sports president Peter Moore this month, we found out that the company is already looking at ways it can use 3D technology to make its sporting titles even more attractive. Moore also believes that 3D is an incredibly big part of Sony's future plans. But neither Moore nor Sony will be pleased to hear analyst Michael Pachter's view on the future of 3D gaming as he sees it being a long time before the technology is widely adopted into people's homes.

For his part Moore thinks that the impact of *Avatar* in cinemas is already showing the way things can be done in the future. "3D – everyone asks me

same way it helped spread HD into people's homes. "You can relate to how high-def was used in sports, how it changed the way we watch television. It's very difficult to watch something in standard definition now. I think sports will have a role to play in this."

However, Wedbush Morgan analyst Michael Pachter told us that he doesn't see 3D making a real impact on the games market for at least another three years. "3D gaming is going to be limited by the adoption of 3D monitors in the household," he explained to us, quite sensibly. "That is something that is definitely coming, but likely not in a meaningful way until 2013 or later, so it dovetails

nicely with the extension of the current cycle.

The next generation of consoles will likely have full 3D functionality."

For EA Sports the 3D

future is something it wants to plan for right now, especially given Sony's commitment. "Are we doing anything?" Moore asked. "Not yet, but clearly you're seeing – as I've seen – how important it is to Sony in particular, and you just think that, you know, we will play a role when we figure out what role it is we should be playing."

For EA Sports the 3D future is something it wants to plan for right now, especially given Sony's commitment

about it, and I'm excited as a consumer," Moore told us. "We talk about what 3D just did for moviegoing with *Avatar*. If you see it, you have a perspective of what 3D should be – not cheesy, reach-out-and-grab stuff, but get you closer to the experience."

He also believes that sports will be at the heart of popularising home 3D technology in much the



STAT ATTACK
78%
of PS3 owners
in the Middle East
registered
online

● Peter Moore is looking to use 3D tech to make EA's sport titles even more realistic.



● Can England win the World Cup? Peter Moore seems to think so.

England To Win!

Moore backs England for World Cup glory

With *FIFA World Cup* on the way from EA, it made sense to ask Moore who he thought would win the tournament. Despite spending much of his life in the US it came as a surprise who he backed, but the depth of his reasoning went beyond our expectations.

"If you think of the England squad right now and it's a winter World Cup, which is very unusual and benefits European teams – although at altitude – and there's a lot of players there where this is their last shot – Terry, Lampard, Gerrard," Moore began. "I think like every Englishman – if I'm trying to think optimistically – then I think the weather has been talked about less than it should."

"I can remember Mexico in 1970 when they were literally panting playing at 5,000 feet and a hundred degrees. It's going to be like today out there [raining] in South Africa. People forget, it's the winter, and if you remember the Confederations Cup last year at the same time people were there in overcoats and gloves and scarves: perfect English weather."





Blue Toad Murder Files

Q&A

Jade Tidy

Relentless Software, producer



Relentless producer Jade Tidy talks exclusively to Play about making its latest game free, learning about digital distribution and what makes a Relentless game

Episode 3 of *Blue Toad Murder Files* is free to anyone who bought or is going to buy the first two. What brought about that decision?

We got great reviews for the game and great feedback from forums and our own website where people loved the style of the game and the voices and playing it with their family, but across the board we had comments about the cost being

everybody that's already bought the game benefits from it as well as anybody else who wants to go out and buy the game. It seemed like the fairest option. We didn't want to upset people who had already bought the game because they've been our champions. We then decided we would bring *Episodes 4, 5 and 6* out for ten pounds instead of two games, which I think is addressing people's comments.

Giving away Episode 3 means that everybody that's already bought the game benefits from it

quite high for the lack of replayability. That's something we could have chosen to ignore or it was something we could be quite brave about. We're too far into development to really tackle the replayability now – that's something we would have to look at in the future – but as we're self-publishing it we could do something about the price. We started chatting about it internally and it seemed like everybody thought it was a really good idea. So, we considered our options and giving away *Episode 3* means that

I don't know if anybody has ever done this before. We got a few looks from people who said, 'Are you sure? Are you

going crazy?' and we probably are, but hell, this is our game and we can do this with it and I'm glad that we've chosen to.

Was the trouble that you didn't have a template or any precedent to work from to work these things out ahead of time?

There's no precedent for it. All of this is new for us. It's our first self-published game, our first downloadable game, our first story-based game with puzzles. A lot of it has been a massive learning experience

and some of it we've just had to make up as we go along, see how it turns out and experiment, which is exciting. We've shown that we can learn from our mistakes and listen to what people say and ultimately we want to please those people that enjoy playing our games.

Some people will have seen the announcement you were making the new episode free and assumed sales must have been poor for the first two. How did they actually do?

I think we'd be a bit mental to give a game away for free if our sales weren't that good, because we would be losing even more money. The sales have been great. It's become a little bit of an addiction for me at the moment of looking each week as the sales figures come through, trying to guess what they'll be next week. We're really pleased with them so far.

Are you getting any kind of indication of the types of gamers who are playing?



Blue Toad Murder Files is a game for all ages to enjoy.

We don't have any telemetry on the game so the only way we can track such things is on the forums, on our Facebook fan page, the emails we get sent and the other people we talk to. Sometimes I'm wary of that, because some of the information we're getting through is a bit biased. These are also the type of people who are used to expressing their opinions on forums. We're not getting to see everyone who is playing the game, but it seems to be a broad spread with a lot of core gamers and also people saying they took the games home to their families over Christmas. I had one guy tell me last week that he'd played it with his mother-in-law who is 70 years old, hates even the idea of videogames, because they're misleading the youth of today and he said she loved it. All the way through she was saying she knew who the killer was and telling them off for getting the pound, shilling, pence puzzle wrong. There's been nice feedback like that from families playing the game together and couples as well.

Do you feel as if you're finding your feet in the digital download world now and have more confidence in it for the future?

I don't think we really had any fear in the first place, we came more from the perspective that this was going to be a fun challenge. We've learnt every step of the way, because we've been working on this for about 18 months to two years now and having staggered production of each episode there's stuff that we learnt from making *Episode 1* that changed the way we made *Episode 2* and so on. All along the way we've been tweaking things and improving them from our previous experience. We've also learnt quite a bit on the marketing side of things, because that was new for us as well. Launching at Christmas seemed to work well, so



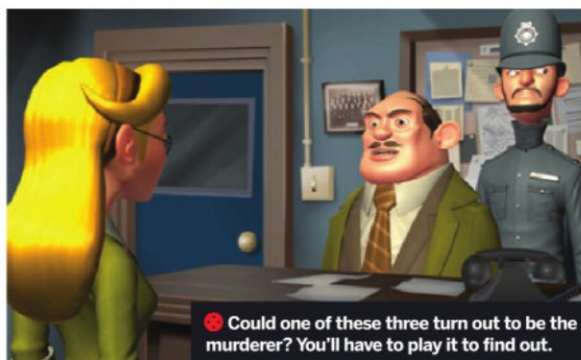
● Murder in the picturesque village of Little Riddle? Surely not.

that's something we'd probably look at doing again. We're learning pretty much as every week goes by and we've been quite reactive to that as I think we're showing with giving away *Episode 3*. We feel more confident and we've learnt a lot, but we would still make more changes if we made another one in the future. We would have a pretty good idea of what to do and what definitely not to do.

So, you must already be thinking about what you're going to do next?

Yes, we're starting to. There's not much I can say at the moment, but we are thinking about what we're going to be working on next. We might have had a few days to sit down and start coming up with ideas for it and I'm sure we'll be able to say some things in the next few months.

Would you say Relentless titles have their own unique sort of personality and character?



We definitely have a culture for our company and at the top of that it's about entertainment. It's about having fun and enjoying playing with friends and family. I'd be surprised if we decided to make a racing game or a first-person shooter. Not to say that they're not fun or games that you could play with your friends or family, they're just not the type of game that we make. We have that as quite a strong undertone for us. I think looking at *Buzz!* and *Blue Toad* you can see that we're quite cheeky with what we do and it really is just focused on getting everybody together in a room and having a good laugh for an hour or so and encouraging people to play games in that way.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS Murder on the PS3? Who are the likely killers?



KRATOS (GOD OF WAR)

If there's a living creature in the PlayStation world that hasn't had its skull crushed, cleaved or pierced by Kratos's blades then we've yet to see it. He's a one-man meat grinder and death follows close behind him.

CHARGE: Genocide



NATHAN DRAKE (UNCHARTED)

For a simple adventurer type, Drake has managed to build quite a body count through his two games. In fairness to him it's mostly people who were trying to kill him first, but all the same it's a lot.

CHARGE: Manslaughter



LARA CROFT (TOMB RAIDER)

Another explorer type who has found herself in a lot of trouble in the past. Her main crime is more the shooting of endangered species than people, though. Sure, the tiger was attacking, but the shotgun to the head was overkill.

CHARGE: Illegal culling



NIKO BELLIC (GRAND THEFT AUTO)

Some men simply cannot get away from their murderous pasts and it would seem that as hard as he tries Niko Bellic is only really good at killing people. Of course it helps that the money is good.

CHARGE: Assassination



KING OF ALL COSMOS (KATAMARI)

The King is probably responsible for more death than all the other suspects combined, but only because he's so damn clumsy. He keeps on destroying planets and stars, the silly oaf.

CHARGE: Involuntary manslaughter

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

	1	Modern Warfare 2 Activision Still no shifting this one despite a wave of superb titles out in the last month. 94%
	2	Final Fantasy XIII Square Enix Making an immediate impact in the chart, we expect <i>Final Fantasy XIII</i> to continue strongly. 85%
	3	FIFA 10 EA <i>FIFA 10</i> continues to do well and even clawed back its position after a drop off last issue. 90%
	4	Heavy Rain Sony A solid start, but <i>Heavy Rain</i> could be the kind of title that does most of its business early. 94%
	5	Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA EA may have its sights on <i>Call Of Duty's</i> crown, but it's not quite there yet in the charts. 93%
	6	BioShock 2 2K <i>BioShock 2</i> knocked <i>MW2</i> off the top for a short time, but it couldn't sustain those numbers. 88%
	7	Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Sony Game of the year status means <i>Uncharted 2</i> is holding very firm in our top ten. 96%
	8	MAG Sony A strong start for this huge FPS, but will the hardcore shooter well dry up before next month's chart? 68%
	9	Dante's Inferno EA This probably wasn't just <i>GOW</i> fans getting an early fix, but you can't discount that possibility. 80%
	10	Bayonetta Sega Now patched, the PS3 version of Sega's top hack-'n'-slasher continues to do well. 93%

PSP CHART

	1	FIFA 10 EA The PSP chart doesn't seem to be changing very much at the minute. <i>FIFA 10</i> remains a winner. NA%
	2	LittleBigPlanet Sony Given <i>LBP</i> 's continued success it's no surprise that <i>ModNation Racers</i> will also be coming to PSP. 90%
	3	Gran Turismo Sony We're still waiting for <i>GT5</i> , but at least we have this excellent handheld version to keep us going. 85%
	4	Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines Ubisoft We'll be seeing plenty more <i>Assassin's Creed</i> games in the future according to Ubisoft. 77%
	5	GTA: Chinatown Wars Rockstar No one seems to know what the future holds for <i>GTA</i> , but surely more PSP outings are guaranteed. 95%

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

Instant Expert

All of the pros with none of the prose



PS3 Price Cuts After Summer?

Analyst doesn't foresee pre-E3 console slashing

SPEAKING EXCLUSIVELY TO Play, VP of analyst services at Electronic Entertainment Design and Research (EEDAR) Jesse Divnich has cast doubt over rumours of a PS3 price cut before or during this year's E3 games expo in LA. He believes that both Sony and Microsoft will look to add value to their console rather than cut away at the price by offering better value bundles, bigger hard drives and motion-control tech.

"Ideally, both Microsoft and Sony would like to maintain their current pricing structure; however, as economics dictates, sales will eventually decline as both consoles reach a saturation mark at their current respected price points," Divnich told us. "The only way either manufacturer can maintain pricing is by increasing the value of the console. In other words, maintain the same price but add a bigger hard drive, free games, accessories, or of course new peripherals.

Which is what I believe both consoles will attempt to do, include their respected motion controls as a standard accessory with every console purchase."

Recent reports suggest that Sony is still not making any profit on its PS3 hardware sales so cutting prices would be a desperate move. Divnich believes that if Sony has real faith in its motion-control tech then it will hold firm on pricing until its release. "I believe that both Sony and Microsoft will gauge the pending success of their respected motion devices," he said. "If either are expected to be popular among the mainstream and core gamers, I foresee Microsoft and Sony withholding a price cut in lieu of a special holiday bundle that will include their motion-control device as a standard accessory at the current price point. If the holiday bundles are successful, they'll drop the words 'holiday bundle' and consider it their standard edition."



⚠️ We may not see PS3 price cuts until after E3.



NO HD CLOUD

Abandon hope, all fanboys who enter here

Hope is a funny thing. It sustains people through hard times, it can lift you up on a bad day, and it can also send internet fanboys into near ecstasy at the merest hint that their dream, a *Final Fantasy VII* remake for modern consoles, will be realised. I hate to be the bearer of bad news but the lusted-after remake of the PlayStation classic is never going to happen.

The lusted-after remake of Final Fantasy VII is never going to happen

There are multiple reasons not to expect a *FFVII* remake any time in the near future. The first is the company line. Square Enix denies the existence of any remake plan. In a recent issue of Japan's weekly game magazine *Famitsu*, *FFVII* character designer, Tetsuya Nomura, said: "I think all the fans would be very happy at the prospect of an *FFVII* remake, but there are no plans for one at the moment."

There, did you read that? The guy who created Sephiroth, and was so invested in *FFVII* that he modelled *Final Fantasy XIII's* protagonist, Lightning, after Cloud, says that there are no plans for a remake.

"But, but, if they were making a remake, they wouldn't tell us. So of course Nomura said that," cries the hopeful fanboy. Unfortunately, that's not how Square Enix operates. The company has made a habit of announcing games years before actual development begins on them. For example, *Final Fantasy Versus XIII*. While the game was announced at E3 2006, we've been told by those within the company that development didn't start on the title until

well into 2009. Square Enix announced a game three years before it started making it. If you think Nomura would keep silent on any *FFVII* remake, you're insane.

"But, but, *FFXIV's* development was kept secret," cries the fanboy. But that's only due to internal politics. The announcement of *FFXIV* had been delayed several times, due to the long development time of *FFXIII*. Again, according to sources within the

company, *FFXIV's* announcement at E3 2009 was a tactic used to pressure Nomura

and co to hurry up and finish *FFXIII*.

The final reason to abandon hope for the *FFVII* remake can be found in the changing business strategy of Square Enix. While *Final Fantasy* is still a main pillar for the company, it's part of its past and will play a much smaller role in its future. Having recently acquired Eidos and all its IP, Square Enix is now

focused on re-shaping itself into a global top-tier publisher. It wants to be more like Activision and less like Atlus.

Like the major publishers of the West, Square Enix is now focusing on outsourcing development. Swedish developer Grin was working on a *Final Fantasy* game before it closed last year. Square Enix has tapped far more than just a single European developer for major projects. The company is currently working with at least one major studio in the US to create a triple-A title.

Between Nomura's denial, Square Enix's history of announcing games years before actual development begins, and the desire to change its company profile, there is very little reason to hold out hope for an *FFVII* remake that would cost millions of pounds. While Square Enix has been known to milk its franchises for all their worth it seems likely that fanboys will have to content themselves with *FFVII's* PS3/PSP release on the PlayStation Store.



Fanboys will have to make do with *Final Fantasy VII's* release on the PSN.

eye on japan

strange goings-on in the land of the rising sun



Trophies from the telly

When Sony Europe added DVR support to the PS3 in 2007, it became one of the few perks of owning a European PS3; cold comfort to those who wanted to enjoy the same backwards compatibility as US and Japanese PS3 owners.

Europe's stranglehold on the Digital Video Recorder market ends in March when Torne, a Japan-exclusive DVR unit, is released. While the device does feature a slew of slick features there is one perk that is targeted at hardcore gamers: Trophy support. That's right, you don't have to play games to earn Trophies any more. You can now enjoy Japanese TV, and when you've finished a full series, you'll earn the 'Master of Final Episodes' Trophy. There are no details on how exactly the device will track exactly what episodes you've watched, but it seems likely that it will only support Japanese domestic broadcasts, which is a shame.



Have a drink with Luida

For the gamer that enjoys a good drink, Japan is a country of near-endless bacchanalian delights. Bars that serve a pint alongside Famicom classics, like the 8-Bit Cafe or 16 Shots, are actually fairly common. However, a bar that is themed entirely around a single game is still quite novel. Square Enix recently opened a *Dragon Quest*-themed bar in Tokyo's notorious party district Roppongi. If you can fight your way through the crowds of drunk soldiers and shady guys who want you to touch girls in their 'club', you'll be able to enjoy such culinary delights as 'goddess fruit' and 'elf medicine'. The bar also features special menu options and services for repeat customers who 'level up'.

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month



Ayane Statue

¥32,800 at Volks.co.jp

Ayane was always a favourite in her native *Dead Or Alive* appearances, but she's now established herself as a mainstay of the *Ninja Gaiden* franchise, too. This rather exclusive and by no means cheap statue of her in her *Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2* form is one for hardcore fans.

USB Yoda

¥5,850 at GeekStuff4U.com

No desk is complete without at least one USB toy to keep you amused, and who better to watch over your battles with the darkside of work or school than Yoda. This particular visage of the great Jedi warrior even lights up and has glowing cheeks. What a marvellous thing.



Lost Planet 2 Vital Suits

\$34.99 each at BigBadToyStore.com

Toys are becoming a big part of establishing game brands these days and *Lost Planet 2* is the latest to jump on the bandwagon with these replicas. These are variations on the GTF-11 Drio Vital suits from the game that can be manned by multiple players. Expect to see plenty more of these soon.



Red Queen Sword

\$229.95 at shop.capcom.com

Capcom fandom is a special kind that goes beyond most other sorts of appreciation. Perhaps it has something to do with Capcom being one of the most consistently excellent publishers around. Anyway, *Devil May Cry* fans can now own a replica of Nero's awesome sword.

BioShock 2 Figures

£11.49 each at Play.com

2K has wasted no time in getting these excellent figures of Subject Delta and Big Sister out to the masses this time around, as *BioShock* has gone from unknown quantity to one of the biggest games in the industry. Play.com actually has a whole array of *BioShock 2* merchandise to collect.



CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 18 March and 14 April. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-shirts.



nospecialshark

£32.97 at MySoti.com

A cool twist on the Uncle Sam recruitment poster calling you to join the ocean. Not sure we're keen on the offer, but you've got to love a shark in a suit.



Gaia

£14.29 at MySoti.com

God Of War III is with us and to mark the occasion why not show your support for the Titans with this unique image of the creator of Earth Gaia? It's time to represent.



IN FOCUS

Things to see and do before the next issue of Play arrives



God Of War III

Developer Sony Santa Monica Publisher Sony Release Date 19 March

IT'S THE BIGGEST game of the coming month and for many it will be the biggest game of the year. Can it live up to the incredibly high expectations we all hold for it? They are massive so it could be tricky, but you can find out for sure on page 60 where our comprehensive review of Kratos's latest and perhaps last adventure begins. It's been quite a journey we've shared with the god killer so far and this instalment looks likely to top anything the series has provided for us in the past. The only real question mark hanging over *God Of War III* is how can it be topped in 2010?



Kick-Ass

Distributor Universal Studios Director Matthew Vaughn Release Date 2 April

BEFORE IT EVEN hit shelves as a comic *Kick-Ass* was already being put into production, which may go some way to telling you this is a movie to look out for. *Layer Cake* director Matthew Vaughn is at the helm of what promises to be a fantastic satire of the kind of superhero clichés and gimmicks we've become so used to.

The Defamation Of Strickland Banks

Artist Plan B Label Atlantic Release Date 5 April AS UP AND coming rappers go, Plan B is one of the fastest growing and most respected. He's even making a fair go of things as an actor and director. Apparently he went to the same school as our news editor Jon Gordon. Anyway, word is this album will be worth hearing.



Chocolate Festival

Why Because chocolate is awesome Where Southbank Centre, London When 26-28 March THE CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL returns to London's Southbank this year and brings with it yet another fine array of cocoa products and some of the best chefs in the country offering demonstrations of their delicious chocolate-based masterpieces.

The Lord Of The Rings Trilogy

Studio Entertainment In Video Director Peter Jackson Release Date 6 April

SHORT OF THE original *Star Wars* trilogy this is easily the most requested and anticipated Blu-ray release thus far. Watching these movies again in high definition is going to be very special, but be prepared for the extended editions to be released sometime later in the year. If you want those then save your money for now.



Out This Month

For a full rundown of the release dates of every PlayStation game visit www.nowgamer.com/release-dates

Visit **NOWGamer**

FRIDAY 19 MARCH



BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Zen United **PS3** £49.99

Best Price: £29.70 from GameGears.co.uk

Score: 85%

We were loving this and then *Super Street Fighter IV* came into the office and we were like, sorry *BlazBlue*, gotta go.



God Of War III Sony **PS3** £44.99

Best Price: £32.99 from JackOfAllGames.co.uk

Score: 88%

It's so epic and so grandiose and so ANGRY! There are also some ridiculous scenes involving big boobies.

FRIDAY 26 MARCH



Just Cause 2 Square Enix **PS3** £49.99

Best Price: £31.99 from JackOfAllGames.co.uk

Score: 87%

Brilliant sandbox action game, and a vast improvement on the original. The controls don't quite match up to its ambition, though. Not quite.



Last Rebellion Nippon Ichi Software **PS3** £44.99

Best Price: £27.99 from HMV.com

Score: N/A

Being a Nippon Ichi game, you can expect dated presentation compensated for by strategic depth and bags of charm.



Prison Break: The Conspiracy Deep Silver **PS3** £39.99

Best Price: £27.85 from ShopTo.net

Score: N/A

Game of the cult US TV series. We don't want to pre-judge, but you probably shouldn't get your hopes up for this one.



Resonance Of Fate Sega **PS3** £49.99

Best Price: £39.49 from PowerPlayDirect.com

Score: N/A

If 70 hours of *Final Fantasy XIII* isn't enough, here's another epic Japanese role-playing game for you.

TUESDAY 30 MARCH



Grand Theft Auto: Episodes From Liberty City Sony **PS3** £34.99

Best Price: £24.99 from HMV.com

Score: N/A

If you don't want to download it, then you can get all the DLC from *GTA IV* on this standalone disc.

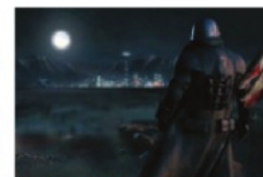
PLAY MOST WANTED

The games that get the **Play** team out of bed in the mornings



Super Street Fighter IV Capcom **PS3** April 2010

There's been some near-complete code of this in the office for a few weeks now, and it is indeed super. Loads of new stuff, including a range of new characters, of course, makes it well worth getting excited about.



Fallout: New Vegas Bethesda **PS3** October 2010

A trailer! At last! It's much like other *Fallout* trailers, which is what we need to get our post-apocalyptic juices flowing. New Vegas appears to have been built where Las Vegas once stood.



Gran Turismo 5 Sony **PS3** September 2010

It was supposed to have been out by now, in Japan at least, but we're all still waiting for it. Honestly, we've resorted to playing *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* instead and it's just not as realistic.

Reload

All the news you might have missed from Play-Mag.co.uk

Keep Up With Play

Never fall behind with **Imagine eShop**

Fallen behind with your **Play** purchases? Been out of the country for a while and found yourself in some mad, inhospitable place that doesn't stock the world's greatest PlayStation magazine? Fear not. You need never miss an issue of **Play** or find your collection full of holes thanks to the Imagine eShop. There you can buy the latest issue of the magazine direct, subscribe to **Play** and even pick up those elusive back issues that you may have missed. We know how important it is that you get every last scrap of **Play** brilliance in your brains. The eShop is a veritable Aladdin's cave of **Play** goodness and you can access it all at www.imagineshop.co.uk.

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Keep up to date with the **Play Twitter feeds**

Sometimes all you need is 140 characters to get your message across, so why not follow the

Play team on their Twitter feeds to get all the latest news, opinions and gossip as it happens from the **Play** office? Get immediate reactions to the newest games being reviewed, links to cool features and all the other weird thoughts and ideas Keith, Gavin, Jon and Ian have to share. You can find links to each of their Twitter accounts at Play-Mag.co.uk or go direct with @PlayMagKeith, @PlayMagGav, @PlayMagJon or @PlayMagIan.

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We don't just write, play, blog and Tweet you know. **Play** is also the creator of the greatest PlayStation podcast around. Get even more views from the team as we argue about

the latest games, reveal upcoming titles we've had the chance to see first hand and wax lyrical about great PlayStation gaming moments. Our monthly podcast show is always packed full of opinion, facts, news and usually someone having to leave to have a little bit of a cry. We pull no punches on the **Play** Podcast. You can download individual episodes from www.Play-Mag.co.uk.



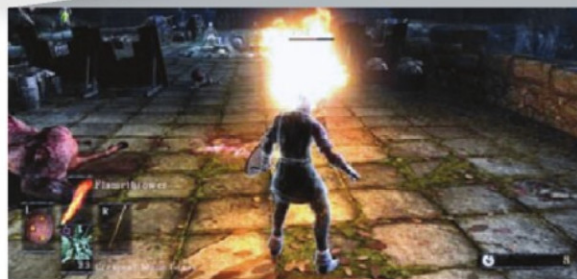
Red Dead takes over Manhattan

Like *GTA IV* before it, Rockstar's latest blockbuster, *Red Dead Redemption*, has taken over Manhattan, New York. This same wall has hosted a number of Rockstar promotions with its head office just up the road.



Sonic 4 is not being developed by Sega

Sega has revealed that while Sonic may be going 2D again with *Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 1*, it won't be developing it. That job falls to Dimps who also created Sonic's recent handheld outings on Nintendo DS.



Demon's Souls getting a sequel?

While we're still waiting to hear when (or if) *Demon's Souls* will be released in Europe, there are already rumours coming from Japan that From Software is working on a sequel. We just want the first one.



Uncharted 2 leads Bafta nominations

The multi-award winning *Uncharted 2* could win more prestigious gongs this month as it has nine nominations at this year's videogame Baftas. The ceremony announcing winners takes place on 19 March.



Instant replay at your fingertips

Sony has teamed up with Arsenal to provide highlights and replays to fans' PSPs at the Emirates Stadium. For a fee Arsenal will give PSP owners access to its Wi-Fi network to watch replays on the handheld.



Set of sequels announced by THQ

THQ has confirmed it is hard at work developing sequels to *Saints Row*, *Red Faction* and *Darksiders*. We're actually expecting *Red Faction 4* and *Saints Row 3* to make appearances at E3 in June this year.



Warner buys Arkham Asylum developer

Rocksteady Studios has already begun work on *Batman: Arkham Asylum 2* for new publisher Warner Bros., but the mega media corporation has cemented the partnership by purchasing a controlling stake in the London studio. Hopefully more *Batman: Arkham Asylum 2* info will follow.



inFamous sequel rumoured

There are suggestions that *inFamous* will be seeing a sequel as soon as this year on PS3. Sony's lineup for late 2010 is a little empty right now so it could do with a big sequel. Sony remains tight-lipped, though.



Heavy Rain Week

To celebrate the release of *Heavy Rain* we ran a week of articles, features and interviews on the **Play** website. You can expect similar coverage in the week leading up to the *God Of War III* release, too.



Motion control for Heavy Rain hinted

Speaking with a Norwegian gaming site, *Heavy Rain* director David Cage has hinted that a motion control update for *Heavy Rain* could be announced soon. "There is a good chance that we announce something about it in the coming weeks," he told them.



ModNation Racers goes handheld

Rather than hang around for another year the way *LBP* did, *ModNation Racers* will be launching simultaneously on PSP and PS3 later this year. The announcement came as a bit of a surprise but we're really looking forward to it.



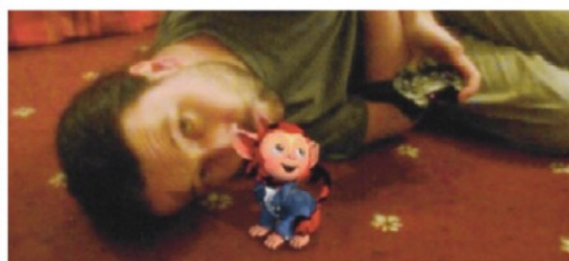
Bobby Lashley joins MMA roster

EA Sports MMA has added another big name to its lineup with ex-WWE wrestler Bobby Lashley adding his name and likeness to proceedings. This news brought with it more images of the stunning-looking MMA game.



Cross-game chat for subscribers only?

Sony has hinted at subscriptions for premium content on PSN and now there are rumours that one such addition would be cross-game chat. Gamers aren't happy but Sony has so far refused to comment.



EyePet 2 on the way, motion ready

No great shock to hear that another game looking to harness motion control later this year is *EyePet*. The game still hasn't been released in the US yet, but has done enough business in Europe to warrant a sequel. The **Play** team certainly enjoyed playing it.

twitterwatch

The wild ramblings and opinions of Tweeting game developers revealed!

dylancuthbert



Just had a brainwave (maybe I'm just a bit slow tho) - stereo eyetoy + PS3 + 3DTV = 3D chat(!) and 3D home movies... give me please!!!

Q Games president Dylan Cuthbert clearly feels the 3D fever like everyone else.

ame360



I have to say, just listening to these debates w/ game industry luminaries really gets the creative gears turning about some things.

Naughty Dog's Arne Meyer enjoyed the gathering of videogame talent at DICE.

benjamesward



This is what happens when you give EA control of online servers. They get shut.

Blur producer Ben Ward was clearly not very impressed by EA's server closures for older online games.

evan_wells



We just got back from a trip to Blizzard to chat with their cinematics department. Great stuff! Thanks for the tour guys!

Co-president of Naughty Dog Evan Wells continues to tour developers, sharing ideas.

TimOfLegend



That Dockers billboard just questioned my manhood. For not wearing Dockers. And I thought the problem was my girlish laugh.

Brütal Legend creator Tim Schafer has started taking ads personally.

RagnarTornquist



Final Fantasy XIII! (That's 13 with an exclamation mark; not a misspelling of an FF14 Alpha.) Tonight I shall gorge on gorgeous CG.

The creative director of Funcom, Ragnar Tornquist, is boning up on his RPG rivals.

DoktorZee



Has been having strange dreams about Splicers all night long...

Even BioWare co-founder and vice president Greg Zeschuk is finding himself lost in the world of Rapture all over again.

WIN A PS3 AND EIGHT TOP GAMES!

Road Warriors In Afghanistan Roll Into Play

To celebrate the release of *Road Warriors In Afghanistan*, we are offering **Play** readers the chance to win a PS3 Slim and eight of the top PS3 games. Plus ten runners-up will receive a copy of *Road Warriors In Afghanistan* on DVD.

For the first time, ITV Studios Home Entertainment brings you an exclusive and unprecedented insight into the lives of those on the front line in Afghanistan.

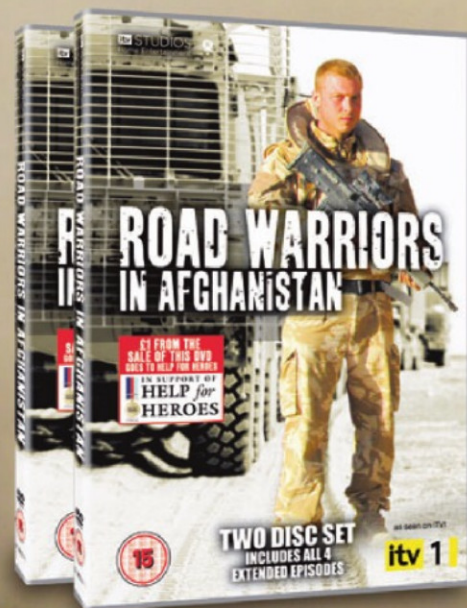
Filmed for three months during summer 2009, this unique look at the British war effort follows the road warriors, who drive hundreds of miles to deliver supplies to the front line troops. Facing raging Taliban gunfire, suicide bombers, landmines and rocket attacks on every mission, *Road Warriors In Afghanistan* follows the convoys and the troops with unlimited access. Up to 150 trucks carrying essential supplies make a huge convoy, which leaves from Camp Bastion, the British military base in Afghanistan. As the warriors fight their way through hostile enemy territory to deliver the supplies and then make the treacherous journey back to Camp Bastion, they face serious life and death situations. Bringing together all eight episodes from the ITV series, *Road Warriors In Afghanistan* provides the chance to meet the people behind the uniforms documenting the reality, dangers and emotions of life on the front line.

For fans *Call Of Duty*, *Medal Of Honor* and *Battlefield* why not see how it really goes down when *Road Warriors In Afghanistan* is released to own on DVD from 8 March 2010.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

WHAT WORD CONNECTS SONY AND ZIPPER INTERACTIVE'S RECENT SHOOTER WITH PLAY?

To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Warriors Comp'. The closing date for entries is **15 April 2010**.



GAMES UP FOR GRABS:

- Modern Warfare 2
- Uncharted 2
- Battlefield: Bad Company 2
- MAG
- Army Of Two: The 40th Day
- FIFA 10
- BioShock 2
- Assassin's Creed II



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All entrants must be 18 years old or over. To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Warriors Comp'. The closing date for entries is 15 April 2010. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified. This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request. From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.



AND FINALLY...
Where hype and hyperbole are welcome



The 'controversial' *Final Fantasy* images in question. Can you spot the differences?

SCREENSHOTS ARE FANTASY

More screenshot controversy for Square Enix

THEY SAY: Square Enix has been hit by more *Final Fantasy XIII* imagery controversy this month. Previously there were accusations that newer screens looked worse than some of the original announcement images. The latest allegation is that in attempting to prove that the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions of *FFXIII* are identical, it doctored screenshots by placing an overlay showing the respective control scheme of each console on exactly the same images. For its part Square Enix has claimed the images were not intended to be seen outside the publisher. "Unfortunately we did mistakenly include screenshots taken for pre-production (non-promotional use only) in our latest release of assets," a statement said.

WE SAY: Square Enix had something to apologise for? The fuss over this was completely overblown for a number of reasons. First, it shows a complete ignorance about the way in which many game images are taken and how games are developed. These images could just as easily have been taken from the PCs Square Enix uses to develop the game rather than on the individual console. In that case these are neither PS3 or 360 shots, but PC ones. Chew on that for a while. The second reason is that the game is finally out on both systems, so it's on everyone's mind. And lastly, the fanboys love to go crazy about one console being better than the other. Here's some insider info guys: *FFXIII* was developed for PS3 first, so chances are it looks better on that. It's just a guess.

METRO MEDICAL MISHAP?

Paper links games with bone disorder

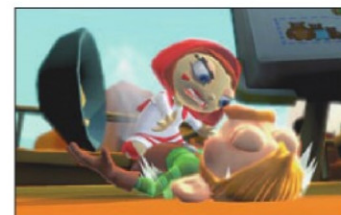
THEY SAY: The *Metro* newspaper in London ran a front-page story claiming that videogames were responsible for an upsurge in cases of rickets in kids across the UK. "Spending hours in front of a computer means youngsters don't go out enough and suffer from a lack of vitamin D," it said. "It can lead to rickets, once associated with poverty in Victorian Britain, but now making a comeback." These claims were made off the back of research in the British Medical Journal looking into vitamin D deficiency in children.

WE SAY: If you saw this story on www.play-mag.co.uk you'll know how it turned out. One of the original authors of the study revealed: "The average age of a child with rickets is around 20 months old: too young to use a keyboard and mouse" and completely debunked the story. The study only mentioned videogames as one example of something children are doing, keeping them indoors. The story could just have easily read, "Homework Causes Rickets."



Are videogames really to blame for an increase in vitamin D deficiency in the UK's children?

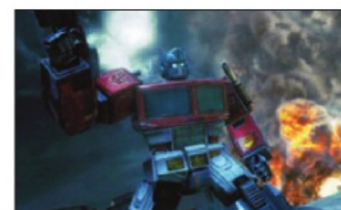
stop please X



X Rated

THEY SAY: Porn legend Ron Jeremy has claimed that games are more harmful than adult films. "[Studies have] found that violent videogames are much a bigger negative influence on kids," he claimed.

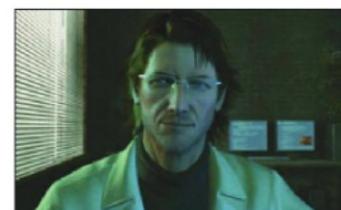
WE SAY: Can't say we know of this 'showing kids porn' study Jeremy seems convinced there must have been. Adult movies, adult games, the clue's in the name.



LaBeouf Backs LaGames

THEY SAY: Actor Shia LaBeouf thinks games are bigger than films. "It's just a different form of entertainment that's more of a tangible, visceral, emotional experience," he told *GamePro*.

WE SAY: In terms of money, games are matching cinema these days, but not in terms of real numbers. Some would say most games are better than LaBeouf's movies, though.



University Challenge

THEY SAY: Videogames will now be studied at Cambridge University. "It's easy to say that these things are just kids' fashions or that they're trash, but I don't believe that's good enough," Prof Maria Nikolajeva told the BBC.

WE SAY: This is all part of a drive to study more fashionable media and trends to get to the route of their popularity. More dissecting games than playing them.

RE:PLAY



This month we're feeling a bit more smug than usual – if that's even possible. Read the star letter to find out why this uber-smugtitude prevails



This month's letters answered by:
Ian Dransfield,
Addictive personality

This month you lot have hit us with some reasoned points, well-written letters and one massive hit of 'wow' to the face. Therefore meaning it's quite hard to take the piss out of anything, really, as you'll see by our non-stupid stupid letter: a bit of a fixture round these parts when I'm handling the section (I'm too nice). Anyway, keep the compliments coming – we do like them, obviously – and, well, just keep sending us whatever comes to mind. We won't always print it, we won't always respond, but we will at least read it. That should be good enough for you, right?

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Rehab through PS3

I was just hoping to send you a quick email that you could maybe print that has taken me weeks to pluck up the courage to write. You see, I'm just wondering if you have ever heard of a PlayStation 3 and your magazine publication ever actually *saving* somebody's life. That's right, your mag has, along with my PS3, saved my life from the hell of heroin and crack addiction.

Don't worry, I won't go into gory details but trust me when I say, I am a year clean and I really do hold my PS3 responsible. I had tried and failed again and again to stop using that poison for the best part of ten years but *nothing* helped until I bought my PS3 and started collecting games and your mag. All the copies I have of it are kept in mint condition (I can't help it, but I think it helps) along with my mint PS3 games (21 of them now, all bought after looking at your PS3 listings, with my wages from my first *job* in nearly seven years) and my spotless console. I think it's because it has finally given me something else to focus on and I

am now a *full year* clean and around all my corners and faced up to and overcome all of my demons.

So, like I said earlier, I'm wondering if you've ever heard of a PS3 and its games and related publications ever saving somebody's life? I have been so scared to write this email as everyone knows that drug addicts, even ex-addicts like me, are looked down upon and hated. It's just that I wanted to thank you and let you know that thanks (partly) to your excellent magazine, I am finally free of the hell I found myself in for ten years. Before December 2008 I spent all my money on that stuff, hurting everyone close to me. But now, I think I have developed OCD looking after my beloved Sony paraphernalia that has literally saved my life.

Thanks again **Play**, without knowing it you've helped me stop killing myself and given me something else to concentrate on.

I am eternally grateful.

Dale C, St Helens

Bayonetta woes (and whoas)

I wanted to write to you guys about *Bayonetta*. It is without a doubt one of the strangest games I've ever played. Not because of the bizarre action, funny cut-scenes and random hair finishers, but because one of the best games I've experienced in my life is one of the worst examples of customer service I've experienced in my life.

I know differences between the PS3 and 360 versions are inevitable, I expect that and rarely jump on the bandwagon of fanboys

whining about puny little differences, such as textures, slight frame rate issues and other crap like that. But this game is different, compared to the 360 version the PS3 version is bad, and I didn't appreciate this until I saw videos comparing the game, and heard normally biased reviewers praising the 360 version. It shocked me a bit.

I'm so annoyed that Sega was lazy with this port, but it's still a great game and this is a unique situation for me to be in. Perhaps I should love the game for what it is but I've paid the same amount as I would have for a 360 version and have received a considerably worse product.

Lee, London

Sega really is doing its best to sort out the PS3 version of *Bayonetta*, though, and the patch that came out the other month has sorted out much of the loading issues. We agree, though – in future, we expect better. *Bayonetta* is still excellent, though.

Is MAG your bag?

Is it just me or does *MAG* seem a bit, let's say, rough around the edges? Everybody I speak to seems to love it and I cannot see the appeal at

★ STAR letter

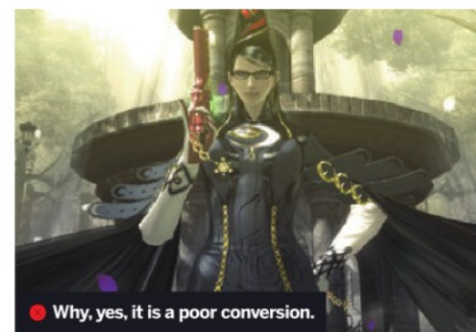


"WINNERS DON'T USE DRUGS"

William S. Sessions, Director, FBI

They should make a film about this letter.

We would like to say "and that, dear readers, is why we do this", but it isn't. This is just a ridiculously pleasant and surprising bonus on top of whatever it is we do. To be honest, none of us have ever heard of a magazine helping someone out in the way you're talking about, Dale – we know about them being useful when used as coasters, or for lining the floor when you get a new puppy, but never like this. It's quite humbling, and actually incredibly inspiring. Thank you for the letter.

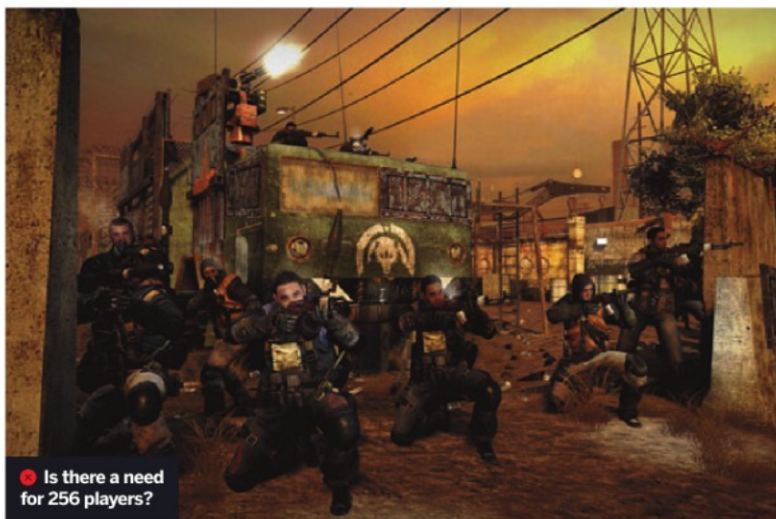


● Why, yes, it is a poor conversion.

all. It just feels cheap and unfinished (exactly like a Pandemic game). Don't get me wrong, I understand trying to get 256 people in one game must make the game quality suffer but then why make it so big? Why not have 128 people and double the gameplay and graphics? 128 is plenty of people!

My hat does go off to Sony for doing it, it is an amazing technological achievement but in my mind not worth the £40 or £50 alone. I don't think coming straight off *Modern Warfare 2* to *MAG* was the best way to appreciate it because that is perfection in online gaming (alongside *Warhawk*, of course). Again, though, if it can't live up to any of the *Call Of Dutys* then why bother buying it? You can only see about 15 other players at one time anyway!

Jimi Mullard, Hooton



● Is there a need for 256 players?



Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print gets a free game, courtesy of EA. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of Bad Company 2, which is out now on PS3 (£49.99). Age verification required.

STUPID letter



How would you finish the latest games without our trusty books?

Change the whole mag. NOW

We're all looking for ways to tighten the budget, ways in which we can still have what we want but at a fraction of the price, while still maintaining quality – agreed? Thus I suggest that you offer **Play** in an alternative format as currently £4.99 is a little steep. I've no need for the DVD as I have the internet; the same can be said for the booklet, which is often left gathering dust. Your need in the magazine to cover all genres doesn't suit mine. The likes of *FIFA*, *Final Fantasy* et al don't intrigue me, thus these pre/reviews are passed with a flick of disgust.

However, I *do* still value your coverage of the industry and the interviews, pre/reviews of genres/franchises that interest me. Thus I propose that you provide a valued **Play** offering online, without the DVD/booklet and the paper format, posting the latest issue on your site as a micro-site should reduce the cost of production. Hence, others like I, can purchase **Play** and have all the things that we so desire without feeling we're paying for something we neither require nor have an interest in. Thoughts?
Jonathan Kelly, via email

The idea of removing the physical aspect of the magazine is one we've sorted, with our partnership with Pixel Mags making **Play** available on your iPhone/iPad/iPod touch via the App Store. The rest of this, though... £4.99 is steep? For a mag we put our heart and souls into? The booklet is filled with tasty solutions and wonderful anthologies of some of our best work, and who wouldn't want the DVD with its collection of our voices. And that's without even getting into the fact that you don't like everything we cover in **Play**... how dare you not like every single page, every single word and every single game we cover? You ungrateful littl... (Restrain that man! – Ed)

F.A.Q.

I was disappointed that *MW2* got the VGA's Game of the Year just because it got loads of pre-orders. I would have been much happier if *Batman: Arkham Asylum* won – it was so inventive and fresh!

Ryan, Dublin

There were many calls for *Arkham Asylum* to pick up Game of the Year, and we agree it was very fresh. However, it should've been *Uncharted 2*.

I checked my PS3 inbox the other day and found a message saying that all PS3 owners will have to pay for online play and that I need to pass the email on as a sort of online petition. Is there any truth in it?

Gavin Mosely, Lincoln
As Gav pointed out in Re:Play in issue 187, these chain mails are a fake; a fraud; a fallacy.

Aaron Asadi doesn't like a lot of movies, does he?

Aaron Lott, via email
No. He doesn't like anything. But he's our boss now, so we'll leave it at that.

You guys run the best mag since *The Simpsons Comics*.
Max Clark, via email
This would be the best compliment ever, were it not for the fact we saved a life this month.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...



■ Play's healing powers 38%
■ 256 is too much 29%
■ Changing Play 18%
■ Bayonetta 15%

PLAY
GOPLAY
the forum...



The official Play and GoPlay magazine forum
The home of the UK's longest running and best PlayStation magazine

FAQ Search Memberlist Usergroups
Profile You have no new messages Log out [Tim]

Choice topics from the Play forum.
Join the discussion at www.play-mag.co.uk

SUBJECT: MOVIES, MUSIC AND TELEVISION

Topic: Rate the last film you watched out of 100%

$x+y=7$
 $y=7-x$
 $x(^2)+y=13$
 $y=13-x(^2)$
 $y=y$
 $7-x=13-x(^2)$
 $7-x+x(^2)=13$
 $x(^2)-x-6=0$
 $(x-3)(x+2)=0$
 $x=3$ and $x=-2$
Dynamite Dan

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: TEH 4K

I don't think I have ever gone off topic on this forum ever.
kev schmit

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: Heavy Rain

Between QTE pissing and QTE pocket fumbling I'm finding it hard to get excited for this game. Trying out new narrative techniques in gaming is great but why does there need to be so much inane sh*t going on?
hazy89

We agree. That is to say those of us who have played enough of the game – myself and Gav – agree. While it isn't a bad game, MAG just doesn't offer enough beyond the fact that there are a lot of people playing it at once. There really isn't much more we can add to that.

Hack to front

A guy calling himself George Hotz (famous for hacking the iPhone) stated it took him a few months but he has managed to get into the PS3 and get it running various bits and pieces including PS2 games on a non-backwards compatible machine. He also states that it could be used to play pirated software.

Needless to say, Sony is investigating and for once, I find myself hoping that the corporation comes out on top. When the PS3 first launched Sony claimed it was unhackable, that's a bold statement to make and one that could turn out to be a little premature, although it should be noted that Mr Hotz said that the security on the machine was substantial. My guess (and hope) is that a forced firmware upgrade negates any possible hack.



I can honestly see no reason why hacking the PS3 would be beneficial to anyone. Sure, you could pirate games but what's the point?

I suppose in this case Mr Hotz has done it just to say that he can. It's more for the recognition than anything else.
Ian White, Essex

Apologies for cutting your letter short, Ian – space constraints. It is, it would seem, like you say – the machine has been hacked so the hacker can say they hacked it. Hacking is naughty – although that film in the Nineties tried to show us it was 'cool' – and shouldn't be done.

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!



- 1 Why are there so few cowboy games out there?
- 2 MAG, BC2 and MW2 – too many online shooters? Or just too many acronyms?
- 3 Were there too many games released in the first quarter of 2010?



FROM THE MAKERS OF GRAND THEFT AUTO

RED DEAD REDEMPTION™

COMING 30 APRIL

ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/REDDEADREDEMPTION



PS3
PlayStation 3



PlayStation Network

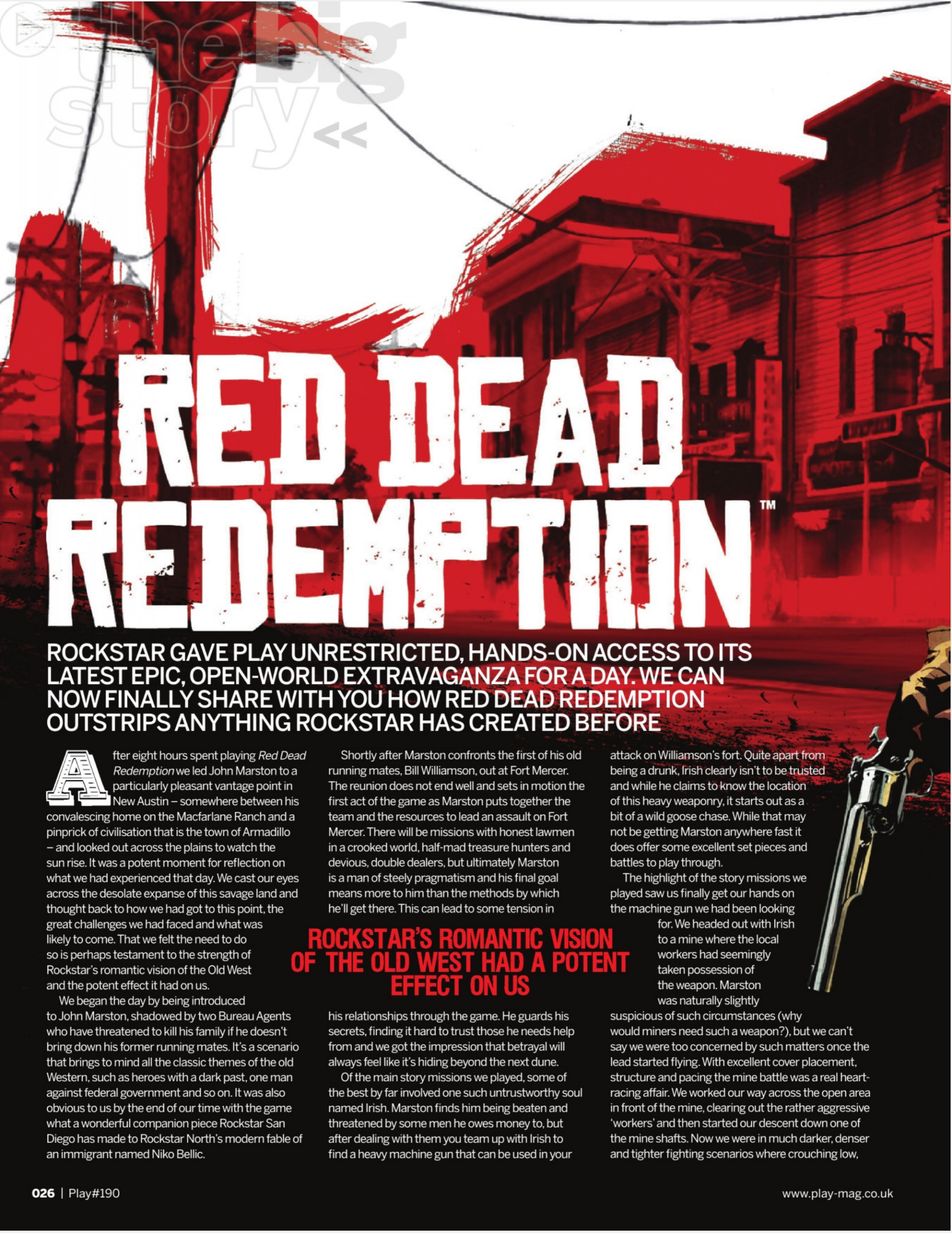


XBOX 360

XBOX
LIVE



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RED DEAD REDEMPTION™

ROCKSTAR GAVE PLAY UNRESTRICTED, HANDS-ON ACCESS TO ITS LATEST EPIC, OPEN-WORLD EXTRAVAGANZA FOR A DAY. WE CAN NOW FINALLY SHARE WITH YOU HOW RED DEAD REDEMPTION OUTSTRIPS ANYTHING ROCKSTAR HAS CREATED BEFORE

After eight hours spent playing *Red Dead Redemption* we led John Marston to a particularly pleasant vantage point in New Austin – somewhere between his convalescing home on the Macfarlane Ranch and a pinprick of civilisation that is the town of Armadillo – and looked out across the plains to watch the sun rise. It was a potent moment for reflection on what we had experienced that day. We cast our eyes across the desolate expanse of this savage land and thought back to how we had got to this point, the great challenges we had faced and what was likely to come. That we felt the need to do so is perhaps testament to the strength of Rockstar's romantic vision of the Old West and the potent effect it had on us.

We began the day by being introduced to John Marston, shadowed by two Bureau Agents who have threatened to kill his family if he doesn't bring down his former running mates. It's a scenario that brings to mind all the classic themes of the old Western, such as heroes with a dark past, one man against federal government and so on. It was also obvious to us by the end of our time with the game what a wonderful companion piece Rockstar San Diego has made to Rockstar North's modern fable of an immigrant named Niko Bellic.

Shortly after Marston confronts the first of his old running mates, Bill Williamson, out at Fort Mercer. The reunion does not end well and sets in motion the first act of the game as Marston puts together the team and the resources to lead an assault on Fort Mercer. There will be missions with honest lawmen in a crooked world, half-mad treasure hunters and devious, double dealers, but ultimately Marston is a man of steely pragmatism and his final goal means more to him than the methods by which he'll get there. This can lead to some tension in

ROCKSTAR'S ROMANTIC VISION OF THE OLD WEST HAD A POTENT EFFECT ON US

his relationships through the game. He guards his secrets, finding it hard to trust those he needs help from and we got the impression that betrayal will always feel like it's hiding beyond the next dune.

Of the main story missions we played, some of the best by far involved one such untrustworthy soul named Irish. Marston finds him being beaten and threatened by some men he owes money to, but after dealing with them you team up with Irish to find a heavy machine gun that can be used in your

attack on Williamson's fort. Quite apart from being a drunk, Irish clearly isn't to be trusted and while he claims to know the location of this heavy weaponry, it starts out as a bit of a wild goose chase. While that may not be getting Marston anywhere fast it does offer some excellent set pieces and battles to play through.

The highlight of the story missions we played saw us finally get our hands on the machine gun we had been looking for. We headed out with Irish to a mine where the local workers had seemingly taken possession of the weapon. Marston was naturally slightly

suspicious of such circumstances (why would miners need such a weapon?), but we can't say we were too concerned by such matters once the lead started flying. With excellent cover placement, structure and pacing the mine battle was a real heart-racing affair. We worked our way across the open area in front of the mine, clearing out the rather aggressive 'workers' and then started our descent down one of the mine shafts. Now we were in much darker, denser and tighter fighting scenarios where crouching low,





TOP 5 PASTIMES

Our favourite ways to waste time in Red Dead Redemption

GAMBLING:

A good way to earn a little money and probably a good way to lose plenty if you take it too far, but there are lots of games of chance you can get involved in thanks to *Redemption*. We've spoken about poker, but you can also play Black Jack, five-finger fillet and accept wagers for races.



HUNTING:

Out in the wild there are no end of challenges to be found hunting animals for their pelts and meats. We found deer offered a particular challenge because of their movement and pace. Armadillos and boars, though, were pretty easy to catch in our cross hairs. We did almost get gored by a bull, too.



DRINKING:

Alcohol may be seen as a great social lubricant, but it can also get you into a lot of trouble. By all means throw back a few whiskeys in some tavern or other, but be careful who you bump into or attempt to draw into conversations. It can end with pistols drawn at dawn. Then again, you may like that idea.



WATCHING FILMS:

The schoolhouse in the small town of Armadillo shows pictures after dark. We saw one animated feature that told of the terrible troubles a remedy salesman found himself in after he kept selling potions full of drugs like morphine, laudanum and cocaine, which tend to have side effects.



DUELLING:

Following on from our ill-fated drinking sessions, getting involved in a shoot-out in the street was bound to follow. We like the duelling system, but unfortunately we weren't very good at it so we ended up being measured by the undertaker more often than not.



moving from cover to cover and making full use of *Red Dead Redemption*'s Dead Eye mechanic was essential.

Dead Eye was something we touched upon in our last preview, but just to recap it begins as a form of slow-motion targeting technique, but eventually becomes a means of 'painting' your enemies to fire a number of shots at specific areas of their body. In situations where we had multiple targets all hiding behind cover, this was brilliant for taking them out quickly and efficiently. The handily placed packets of TNT didn't do any harm either to be fair. Once we had reached the gun and loaded it into a mine kart Marston had to push the kart back out of the mine and even ride it a few times, still picking off those supposed miners on the way. It was a great sequence that had plenty of payoffs and showed off a great many features that make *Red Dead Redemption* feel really unique.

The Euphoria and RAGE engines for instance have really come into their own with this game. They weren't half bad in *Grand Theft Auto IV* and certainly had their charm in *Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis*, but *Red Dead* is a whole new leap forward. Because you can target specific areas on an enemy's body there

are unique reactions to every hit. They stumble, fall, spin and collide in often very dramatic ways. There's even a hint of that over-the-top, stuntman style that we would associate with Western films. Perhaps not realistic, but it feels right given the setting. And then there's the animals and in particular the horses in the game. You can sense the power in their muscles as you ride them, their sinewy muscles pulsating under the skin. They are something to behold and riding them couldn't be more intuitive.

As we described last issue you must use  to spur the horse onward and keep pace, eating into its stamina with each kick, but this replenishes. This leaves the triggers open for using weapons and your lasso and out in the wilderness this gives you even more freedom. We spent a great deal of time out in the middle of nowhere hunting the wildlife, lassoing horses and cattle or just protecting ourselves from hungry packs of wolves. Another neat



● Upgrade your horse with steel radials.



● Hunting animals out in the wild is one of the best things to do in the game.

● With Dead Eye you can shoot the gun (or hat) from someone's hand.



▶ little feature of horse riding that struck us as devilishly brilliant in its simplicity was holding down **X** to gallop at the same speed as your posse. That means you won't need to keep checking your speed when riding with a group or following someone. You know you'll always be together thanks to that one button, which worked very nicely indeed.

In fact there are many smaller features that make a great deal of sense in *Red Dead Redemption* and that really add to the feel of the game in marked ways. Heading back out into the wild you can save at any point by building a camp. Your campsite can be upgraded over the course of the game, but all of them replenish health, Dead Eye and ammo to some degree. The ability to essentially save anywhere has a huge impact on how you play, because you know you can go out into the wilderness and not need to visit a town for some time just to save your progress. Once in a town, though, you can purchase flats or rooms to stay in and can naturally sell off the animal skins and meat you may have collected.

The whole economic system, which we only really scratched the surface of, seems very deep. On top of buying ammo, medicine and food you can also purchase clothing (to build outfits that affect how NPCs treat you), treasure maps that require you to read clues in the environment as well as on the map to find loot and various other pieces of kit that you may find handy. Of course, that's just the shopping economy. You can also earn money by hunting bounties. The Sheriff's office or Telegraph office will usually have a wanted poster hanging on the wall and if you want to take it Marston will tear it down and have a red

skull added to his map. This marks the last-known location of your target.

The poster will tell you whether or not your target is wanted dead or alive and you'll get different amounts of money depending on how you serve them up. Capturing a bounty alive is obviously trickier, but if you wound them in the leg and then lasso them they shouldn't prove too troublesome. Loyal bandits will surround many, though, so fighting your way through them safely will probably take top priority. You too can get a bounty on your head if you start committing crimes.

Even lassoing people in public can get you into trouble and unlike *GTA* the cops have no concern about opening

fire on you immediately for any infringement of the law. If your bounty goes up high enough then hunters will start chasing you, too, but the bill can be paid by you or you could get your hands on a pardon letter.

Beyond that you can also earn money by accepting wagers and these take many forms. Our first wager encounter was out in the desert where a man challenged us to shoot down some birds in a certain amount of time. We hadn't unlocked our full Dead Eye abilities at this time so we made do with some standard slo-mo shooting instead. Even so we picked off the birds nicely, walked away with an extra \$10 in Marston's pocket and took our first step on the bird-shooting ladder. Later we were challenged

MANY OF THE SMALLER FEATURES MAKE A LOT OF SENSE



THINGS TO COME

Plains, trains and automobiles

THE OPENING CUT-SCENE of *Red Dead Redemption* in which we first meet John Marston and the extreme nature of his predicament is revealed also gave us a glimpse of things to come. He arrives by paddle steamer in a town named Blackwater, which we imagine is somewhere in the region of West Elizabeth, the more civilised part of *Red Dead's* world. Unlike the towns in New Austin, where we spent our time during the demo, Blackwater has paved streets, is populated by ladies and gentlemen in their Sunday best and even has cars parked by the road. Yes, you read that right. There are definitely some early automobiles in *Red Dead Redemption*. We can only begin to imagine the carnage that's going to bring.



THERE ARE SO MANY MORE THINGS TO DO IN THIS WORLD THAN WERE EVER POSSIBLE IN GTA OR MOST OTHER OPEN-WORLD GAMES

in the small town of Armadillo to a duel. Our fame hadn't got all that high, but clearly the guy was a bit of a waster. Alas we took the challenge, but failed miserably, ending up dead. The idea is to paint targets on your opposing shooter as quickly as possible, much as you might normally do with Dead Eye. This builds up a meter on the right of the screen and the first to fill it fires first. You can jump the gun a little by beginning your draw first, but if you wait you earn more Honor.

Our last little money-earning scheme involved some gambling in the Armadillo saloon. There are a number of different pastimes to enjoy in *Red Dead Redemption*, but the only one we experienced was Texas Hold 'Em poker. It played exactly as you might expect. All the rules of poker were in place including the betting system of using small and big blinds, you can raise, check, fold and go all in if you want to take the risk. The AI will also react to how you play, calling and falling for bluffs as well as suckering you into silly moves. It's quite a diverting way to spend your time and you could easily lose a lot of money playing it.

Poker is by no means the most distracting thing you can do in the game and as you may be able to tell by how we've gone on about it, we spent much more time just wandering around involved in distractions than we did playing the story. On top of the story missions, which are marked by the initials of your contact's name (as in *GTA IV*), there are two further kinds of mission that do not affect the story. One is the side quest, which appears on your map as a white question mark. These can range from quick trips across town to get items to quests to save innocent civilians from

local gangs. We tried a few and each added new levels of depth to the world, showing both its humane and monstrous side. We'll say no more for fear of spoiling things, but we recommend you spend some time on these when you get the chance. And much like the random blue pedestrians in *GTA IV*, these side missions can lead to further escapades down the line.

The other form of mission, though, is something altogether more random and could so easily be overlooked. As you travel around you will sometimes see blue dots on your map and these represent mini-events that you can get involved in. One example was a patron of a saloon dragging a girl out into the street with the intention of stabbing her. We could intervene and kill the man or at least wound him or we could ride on by. We could even kill both of them and loot the bodies if we wanted. Another more devious event that caught us out several times was a bandit trap involving a hijacked stagecoach at the side of the road. A girl would call for help and as soon as we stopped all the bandits would open fire. It won't always be that way, but these honey-traps really made us think twice about helping people.

In short, New Austin and by extension the full world of *Red Dead Redemption* is full of content and while it may be characterised by its wide-open spaces, they are by no means empty. As well as the wildlife and the side missions there are so many more things to be doing in this world than were ever possible in *GTA* or most other open-world games. In eight hours we only really began to get a flavour of the game and we didn't get bored for a moment. If *Red Dead Redemption* can remain that relentlessly entertaining throughout then Rockstar has a seriously big hit on its hands yet again.

THE Houser HOUSE

Redemption impossible even 12 months ago says Rockstar founder

SPEAKING WITH GAMES™ this month, Rockstar founder and *Red Dead Redemption* writer Dan Houser explained why, to his mind, San Diego's latest game would have been impossible to make before. "You couldn't make a game like *Red Dead* until this point, with its vast open areas of rolling wilderness, a complex, living ecosystem and a massive array of characters, side quests and so on, all flowing together," he said. "Equally, you couldn't make horses, stage coaches or rope look or behave remotely sensibly. Nor could you show any kind of emotion on characters' faces. All of these factors combine to make most Western games very limited, or very flawed, and push game makers into making the characters and styling of the game either camp or absurd, as there is nothing worse than having a semi-serious story supported by a ludicrously limited or ugly game."

And the challenge has still taken its toll according to Houser. "This project has been enormously challenging for us, despite our massive experience at making open-world games, the big team we have on the project, our strong technology base in RAGE and experience of making *Red Dead Revolver*," he explained about the project. "We believe that *Red Dead Redemption* is a game that does justice to the genre of Westerns, and there is no way someone could have made a game like this 12 months ago, let alone on previous generations of hardware."

You can read much more from Dan Houser on *Red Dead Redemption* in games™ issue 94, out now!





● If you don't have a train ticket life is tough.



● Conversations with NPCs can lead in many directions.



● The guy in the grave is Seth who enjoys digging up the dead... a lot.

GOING WEST

Red Dead Redemption art director Rob Nelson tells us about the evolution of Red Dead, why you won't find bears in Mexico and the game's online multiplayer

> How do you respond to the constant claims that *Red Dead Redemption* is 'GTA in the Wild West'?

It's a flattering comparison and an easy one to make, but it's not that accurate. They're similar in the sense that they're both open-world games that benefit from Rockstar's development approach and experience, which is a combination of a strong balance between story and gameplay, high production values and an obsessive attention to detail. But an open world in the wide expanses of the Old West presents a different set of design challenges to working inside a modern day Liberty City, so the end results are different in lots of ways, from the structure of missions, to the balance between missions and off-mission activities, to the way the world interacts with the character. And of course, *Red Dead Redemption* is built around the Dead Eye targeting system, which makes each individual gunfight really satisfying and fun.

THE DEAD EYE TARGETING SYSTEM MAKES EACH INDIVIDUAL GUNFIGHT REALLY SATISFYING AND FUN

What inspired you to give the *Red Dead* series a next-gen resurrection?

We acquired *Red Dead Revolver* partially made from publisher Capcom as part of a deal to acquire its developers, Angel Studios – known today as Rockstar San Diego – and worked hard to make sure the end result was a game we were proud of and that had the Rockstar vibe. It remains one of our most beloved titles with fans and critics and was very successful for us. But even as we were working on it, the potential for an open-world Western game built from the ground up with the same kind of production values as a *Grand Theft Auto* seemed like an awesome opportunity. Unfortunately, the technology at that time couldn't realise our ambitions for a sequel. It made sense to wait, to make sure we had a strong engine in RAGE (Rockstar's

Advanced Game Engine), and then set to work creating an immense, beautiful and enormous landscape – the most believable Rockstar has achieved to date. But that's just one part of the package.

What have proven to be the greatest challenges in creating *Red Dead Redemption*?

Once we understood the kind of game we were making, the challenges became clear: how do we make these beautiful, great open spaces interesting from a gameplay point of view? We solved that through the use of dynamic events that bring the world to life around the player. What can we do in a Western game that's never been done properly in a game before? We worked very hard to create some amazing tech that, among other things, gives you a realistic lasso that you can use to hog-tie animals and people. How can we go beyond our other open-world games in terms of immersion?

We created a new blend of Natural Motion's Euphoria character movement system and our own proprietary physics to create new location-based physics for people and animals that recalls the classic

'stunt' falls from the greatest Westerns.

Red Dead Redemption seems to have been influenced by a wide range of Western movies. But if you had to pick one particular movie that you wanted your game to really capture the feel of, which one would you go for?

Red Dead Redemption isn't based on any particular Western book or film. A lot of people have worked on this game, and they each have their own tastes and inspirations when it comes to films or books or TV that have inspired new ideas within the game. We're also trying to tell an original story rather than lean on any specific external influence. In terms of the actual time *Redemption* takes place, and the concept of yesterday's men having to embrace a rapidly changing landscape,



● There's nothing more satisfying than leaping onto a moving train.

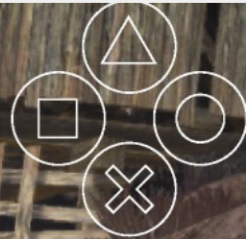
we aspire to the kind of action and drama that Sam Peckinpah delivered with *The Wild Bunch*.

Other than Western movies, are there any other, less obvious, sources of reference in terms of both story and style? History books? Museums? Literature?

The same team we use to research the time periods and locations for *Grand Theft Auto* games spent an incredible amount of time working on *Redemption*, ploughing through the historical photographic archives in Washington, taking trips out to the desert to shoot footage and take images of places that stood out to us, looking at weather patterns and plants and animals that you'd expect to find out in the wilderness. We do a huge amount of research. There's been so much of that, along with looking at history books and straight literature. Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, despite being set before *Redemption*, is also an influence.

What specific elements of the Wild West setting do you think translate especially well into a videogame?

Westerns are to some extent about gunfights and survival, and we're always trying to make combat and gunplay better and more fun with each game we create. When you're dealing with something like *Red Dead Redemption*, a Western-themed game, getting the gunplay right is crucial. You have to make sure every weapon looks and feels awesome. We started with the combat mechanics you might be familiar with from *GTA IV*, in that it's cover-based and the controls are similar. But we want it to feel better, more seamless as you dive



● Keeping up with your posse is made very easy in *Red Dead* and really helps you feel involved.

from cover to cover, and the weapons add to that, too. We're also bringing Dead Eye back from the original *Revolver*, which works in three separate ways as you progress through the game: first, you can slow time before you shoot people, later, you'll earn the ability to paint targets on their bodies by moving the cross hairs over them, and eventually you'll be able to be even more accurate by placing those targets yourself. This can make for some epic and unforgettable shoot-outs.

How will the Reputation system work? Will it unlock certain benefits/penalties? Will it affect the narrative of the game a great deal?

We wanted *Red Dead Redemption* to go beyond our other games in more than one way, and having the world around you react to your presence in a deeper, more complex way was one of the ideas we explored. We devised the Fame and Honor systems as ways to affect, within the game world itself, the population, and their reactions to the choices you make. The story is separate to that. When you're in the world itself, however, and are playing it as a good or bad guy, we wanted to have some kind of ramification without actually penalising the player. If you want to go into a small settlement and take everyone out and turn it into a ghost town, you can. Be prepared for your Honor to go down and for people to react to you differently than if your Honor was higher. It's also worth mentioning that the moral barometer is in constant flux – your Honor can go up or down. Every encounter is another opportunity to turn it all around and be good. And if you do, the benefits will be different. Your Fame, though, will increase with every significant action you take.

The game is being described as more dynamic and open than say, *GTA* – does the narrative still drive the campaign?

The game is still driven by a powerful and epic story, and it's always there for you to progress with at the speed you like. But we've managed to create this huge, believable world that goes beyond what we've done in our other games, populated with a staggering number of dynamic, contextual activities that you can interact with if you choose. We love hearing stories about random things that happen to different people in our games, of something they saw or did that others missed. *Red Dead Redemption*, as much if not more than any other game that we've done previously, lends itself to those different, anecdotal experiences.

What can you tell us about the multiplayer component in *Red Dead Redemption*?

When you're dealing with an open world and a Western-themed title, the potential for multiplayer experiences is enormous, so it would have been a crime for us not to feature it, not to mention the fact that *Red Dead Revolver's* multiplayer was pioneering in its own right at the time. We've spent a lot of time thinking about what people would want – being able to ride in a posse, keeping the dynamic events in the open world so you can all interact with them and assault gang hideouts, tear up towns, even hunt down some of the larger animals in a group – it's all possible. At the same time, things like duelling in groups, a big *Once Upon A Time In The West*-like standoff but with more than double the amount! Also, it gives us a chance to put our Western spin on some classic competitive multiplayer modes like Capture the Flag and so on.

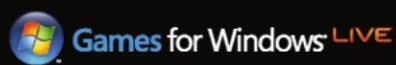


● Fire can be a risky thing to play with in *Redemption*. That's a warning.

It all adds up to what we feel is the best multiplayer component we've created yet.

What are the aesthetic and gameplay differences between the various territories?

They do genuinely feel different to one another, from the architecture to the townsfolk, to the kinds of dynamic events you might come across, as well as having quite clearly defined different themes in the narrative of each level – first about the Wild West as it slowly gets tamed, then about a brewing civil war in Mexico, and then about the emergence of the modern world in the last section. In Mexico, you might see the Mexican Army ruthlessly executing rebels by the roadside. If you're in West Elizabeth, among the tall trees and snow to the northwest, you're likely to come across very different events as the modern world comes to the Old West. Animals play into that, too, as you won't find bears that are typically found roaming the forests near the mountains wandering down into Mexico. Another layer of that is the music, and the tremendous work that the band, Friends of Dean Martinez, have created. It's different depending on the region and what's happening on and off-mission, and there's a lot of it. In short, we've put a lot of time into making the world feel different while still feeling consistent and like part of a larger whole.



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LIVES OF THE RICH AND DANGEROUS

PLAY HEADS TO TOKYO TO SEE THE REAL-LIFE WORLD OF YAKUZA 3 **Words** Ryan Winterhalter

"Hey, man! Come to my club. Beautiful Japanese girls. Touch all you like," a Nigerian man shouts at a lost American tourist.

"You want massage?" A Thai prostitute asks a Japanese businessman, as a young couple hustles through the gauntlet of brothels, massage parlours, and hostesses that is Kabuki-cho (literally Kabuki Town), Tokyo's most popular red-light district. Despite recent efforts to clean up the

neighbourhood, it is still filled with yakuza and Triad-run shops that cater to every vice imaginable. It is what Obi-Wan Kenobi might call a "wretched hive of scum and villainy." What a great place to set a videogame.

Kabuki-cho is home to the characters of Sega's *Yakuza* series. Actually, the game takes place in a fictional version of the town called Kamura-cho, but anyone who has been to the real Kabuki-cho will be able to navigate

its fictional version with ease. For the first PS2 *Yakuza* game, the development team at Sega re-created the neighbourhood with incredible fidelity and just enough minor differences to avoid copyright infringement.

The anticipated *Yakuza 3* for the PlayStation 3 brings that fidelity to new heights. Presented here is a short photo tour of both Kabuki-cho and Kamura-cho that highlights the great lengths the *Yakuza* team went to in order to make even the most prison-hardened yakuza feel at home in the game.

Welcome To Yakuza Country

This sign marks the most famous of Kabuki-cho's many entrances. It simply reads "Kabuki-cho road number one." Its digital counterpart hosts a slightly more creative message that roughly translates to, "The unrivalled on heaven or earth avenue of Kamura-cho." This sign exemplifies Sega's tendency to take the reality of Kabuki-cho and transform it into a recognisable but exaggerated digital form.



The entrances to the real and digital districts.



OBI-WAN KENOBI MIGHT CALL KAMURA-CHO A 'WRETCHED HIVE OF SCUM AND VILLAINY'



What's Your Poison?

Kabuki-cho is a place that requires no exaggeration. It's an area where thinly veiled criminal activities occur in the open, despite closed-circuit camera monitoring and a heavy police presence. Take the example of the annaijou or 'Information Place.' These outlets provide visitors with free information about the services provided at various kinds of bars and clubs in the area.

Many of the venues advertised are legitimate and legal businesses. Others maintain a veneer of plausible deniability when it comes to illegal activity – like hostess bars, where salary men pay beautiful women to drink with them. However, drinking isn't the only thing that takes place. These clubs often engage in a practice called 'after,' where the customer can pay a certain fee in order to see the hostess 'after' her shift. Ostensibly, the customer is only paying for the hostess's time. Anything that happens then is the business of two consenting adults. Hostesses play a prominent role in the side missions of *Yakuza 3*, where it's possible to invest in, and manage, a club and the girls in its employ.

In addition to the hostess clubs, many speciality clubs catering to those with very particular fetishes sometimes advertise in annaijou. One of these speciality clubs, called Sky Heart, was designed to look like an aeroplane cabin, and customers would pay for the privilege of groping and harassing the stewardesses. The particular fetish of groping flight attendants did not prove popular enough to support Sky Heart, and it eventually went out of business. However, another club that caters to those who fantasise about fondling women on bullet trains is still alive and well.

Annaijou also dispense information about more explicit venues for prostitution, such as massage parlours and brothels. They will often provide information about the girls available. "All our girls are under 45 kilograms!" claims one advert.



Peggle-Tastic!

Kabuki-cho isn't only about sex. It's also about gambling, and the most popular way to gamble in Japan is pachinko, a form of pinball that involves dropping balls through a pegged board. Since most forms of gambling are illegal in Japan, customers don't win cash. Instead, they keep the balls that land in correct holes at the bottom of the board as 'souvenirs'. Of course, these 'souvenirs' can be exchanged for cash at the various shady outlets that tend to crop up around pachinko parlours.

Oriental Passage is Kabuki-cho's most prominent pachinko parlour, and Sega replaced it with Volcanic Volcano.



Some of *Yakuza*'s inhabitants get down to some street combat.



We'd bet these guys are involved with organised crime in Kamura-cho.



The Koma Theatre is thriving in *Yakuza* but closed in real life.

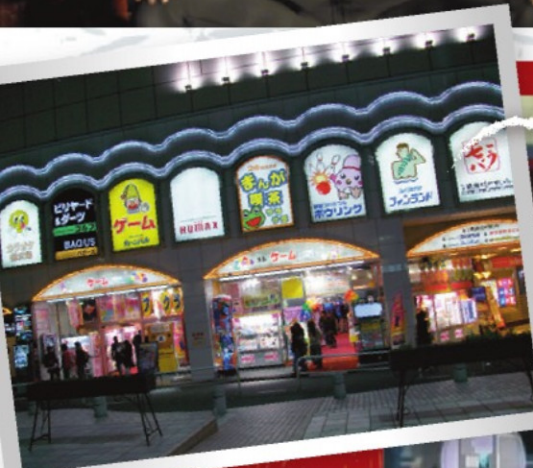


The plaza features a lot of the family-friendly entertainment.

Fun For All The Family

Not every business in Kabuki-cho caters to gambling addicts and those who want to grope young girls. There is a long but dying tradition of family-friendly entertainment in the neighbourhood. These businesses revolve around a plaza near the number one entrance. The Koma Theatre, which occupies an entire city block, dominates this square.

The theatre fell on hard times in the middle part of the last decade and was shut down at the end of 2008. The closure dealt a severe blow to the Kabuki-cho Renaissance movement, a group championed by Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara, which is attempting to remake Kabuki-cho into a thriving and respectable cultural hub. However, the digital version of the Koma Theatre is still alive. The theatre is far too important a landmark to remove from the game, regardless of the fate of its real-life inspiration.



Kabuki-cho has the Humax game centre whereas Kamura-cho is littered with Club Segas.



Coin-Op Careers

Given that *Yakuza 3* is a Sega game, it is only natural that all the arcades in Kamura-cho are Club Segas. In reality the nearest Club Sega is on the other side of nearby Shinjuku station.

The Humax game centre lies next to the remains of Koma Theatre. This arcade, with its loud collection of brightly lit crane games, is impossible to miss. While arcades in Japan are struggling, they are far healthier than their Western counterparts. Thanks to cramped living conditions, many Japanese gamers prefer to play outside of the house and will focus on one game at one arcade night after night for years on end. Usually the newest games dominate the scene, but occasionally, you will stumble across a *Street Fighter III* or *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* master. We've found such encounters occur more often in Kabuki-cho than in desolate suburban arcades.

This Isn't Just Food, It's Donki Food

The denizens of Kabuki-cho work from the late night into the early morning, and they tend to sleep during traditional business hours. Where do they shop? At Don Quijote, of course. Inexplicably named after the fictional and foolhardy Spanish knight, Don Quixote, Donki, as the Japanese call it, is a discount store in Japan that sells groceries, electronics, furniture, gag gifts, and pretty much anything else you could name, 24 hours a day.

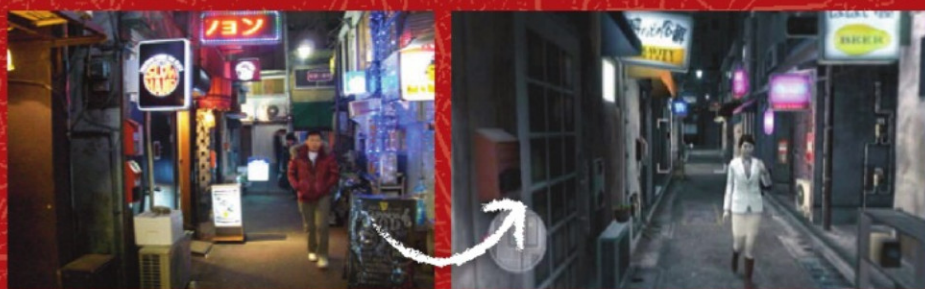


● You'll find everything you need at any time of the day at Don Quijote.

Stronger Than Fiction

Yakuza 3 plays up the presence of organised crime in the area. In reality, while Kabuki-cho teems with yakuza activity, since 2002 a beefed-up police presence has made yakuza members harder to spot on the street. Other Japanese cities contain districts that have far more ostentatious roaming gangsters. Yokohama City, for instance, contains bars and neighbourhoods where they walk around with impunity.

However, the criminals of Kamura-cho are far more violent than their real-life counterparts. While yakuza do fight each other, and we have witnessed it, brawls are not a common occurrence. The yakuza are, at their heart, businessmen, and violence is bad for business. Commonly spotted yakuza activities can seem downright innocent. Lower ranking gang members can be seen selling fried octopus at shrines and festivals, while higher level members, as in most organised criminal organisations, know how to make money without doing any of the dirty work themselves.



Three's A Crowd

There is one area of Kabuki-cho that is relatively free from yakuza influence. The business owners of the Golden Gai (called Champion Gai in *Yakuza 3*) are quite proud of their tradition of resisting organised crime. The illicit establishments that pervade the rest of the area are absent here, and area regulars consider it the safest area of Kabuki-cho. It consists of a few narrow alleyways lined with nearly 150 bars that can hold as few as three people. The largest watering holes will seat ten, if customers don't mind being packed together like commuters on the Tokyo subway during rush hour.

Some bars are so small that they only accept regulars. If you don't have a friend to vouch for you, tough luck. Each bar caters to a specific kind of clientele, and the area has been popular among artists and the cultural elite since the Sixties.

Even we have our own regular bar in Golden Gai. The owner is reclusive and doesn't want his tiny establishment flooded by swarms of tourists, so we've been sworn to secrecy about its exact location, but we can tell you that if you are resourceful and know the right people, you can find a small bar that caters to retro gamers called Qunais Bros.

If you ever visit Tokyo, Kabuki-cho is a must-see. While there is all kinds of illegal activity in the neighbourhood, thousands of people a day come and enjoy the area without breaking any laws. Even if you can't make it to the real thing, Kamura-cho has a similar atmosphere that, while not as good as the real thing, offers a fascinating view of the seedier side of Tokyo.



● One of Kabuki-cho's many game centres.

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PREVIEW

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



FIGHTING TALK

Producer Neven Dravinski talks fisticuffs and features



What are the plans for the Create A Fighter mode this time around?

The big change is the hands the fighters use. We've added southpaw so you can dictate which is the dominant hand. There will be a big improvement as far as visuals go as we wanted to match the new photorealistic fighters in the main game.

Have you already got a list of new features for 2011?

We have a list that stretches to 2015 – there's never a time when we're not coming up with improvements and new elements to add into the game, but it's all about deciding when to implement them.

One area in which 2009 could have been improved was the online play, what can we expect from 2010?

We learnt a lot from last year and as soon as we realised there was an issue we worked diligently to put out 'the patch', so this year you're going to see a lot of online improvements. There's this concept of online guilds and camps, so you can learn and fight with your friends. The online experience is going to change dramatically in the upcoming game. But this sentiment extends to every aspect of the game – you'll really notice a difference.

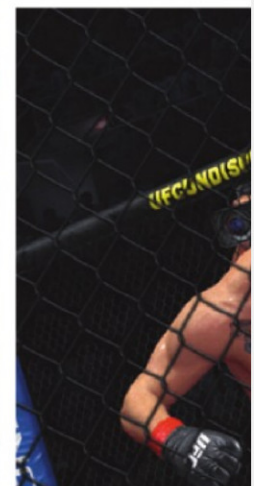
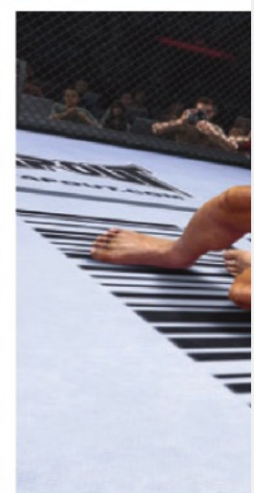
With Project Natal and Sony's Motion Controller on the horizon, are there any plans to implement motion functionality into the game?

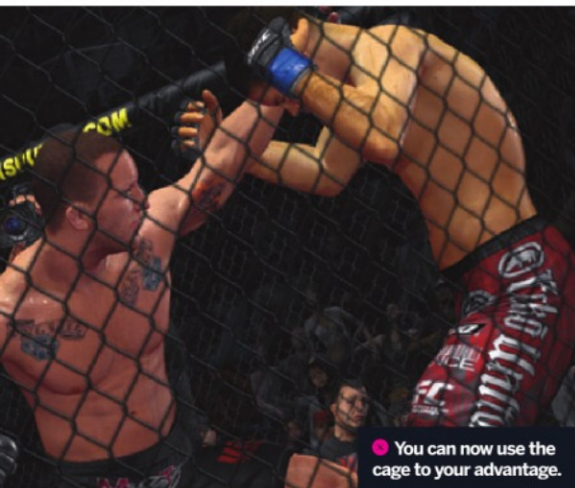
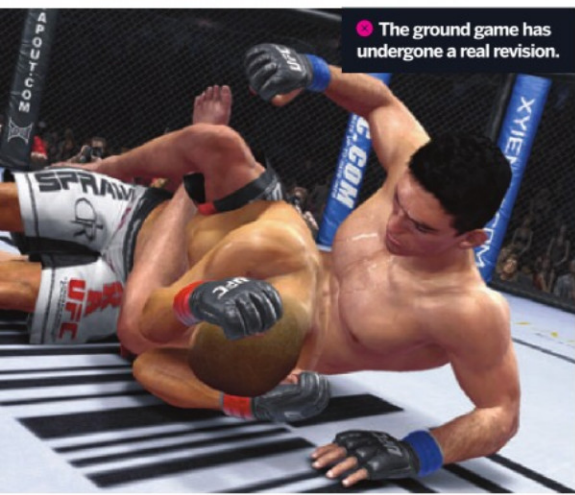
As much as I love the ability to be able to breakdown the fourth wall, so to speak, and I think there's certainly a place for it, I'm just not sure if it's in fighting games. I really like the dynamic we have already and if that sort of functionality does find its way into fighting games it would have to be executed very well to avoid controversy.

Obviously, we already have several long-standing fighting franchises, like wrestling and boxing, do you see UFC as making up that third pillar?

I would say so. UFC is as real as it gets, you're seeing the science of fighting. There are very few restrictions; one man will win and the other will lose, which is very enticing.

Instead of button bashing you're now made to use the sticks in order to escape a submission hold.





RELEASE DATE: 28 MAY

UFC Undisputed 2010

Is the Octagon the shape of things to come?

How do we kill *UFC Undisputed 2009*? Predictably aggressive words from Neven Dravinski, the producer of a game that is all about pounding your opponent into a bloody mess or applying a submission move that will make them pass out or at least tap out when the pain is too intense. But the strong statement is a signal of intent that Dravinski and his team take their challenge very seriously. With competition from the master of the sports franchise, EA – who will be entering MMA territory this year – THQ is under immense pressure to not only improve on its hugely successful *UFC Undisputed* title of last year but to ensure it can best whatever EA brings to the table.

This will make for a much more varied experience when it comes to both the standing and ground game

It seems fitting then that THQ chose Las Vegas as the venue to give us the first showing of the latest *UFC* iteration. As neither publisher is sure of which cards the other is holding, but hope that when their hands are shown they are the ones holding all the aces, and given what we've seen of *UFC Undisputed 2010*, THQ certainly has no reason to bluff. Given the surprise success of last year's game the developer might've been inclined to make a few token changes and give the visuals a fresh lick of pixel paint, but any half measures seem to have

been completely rejected by the team in favour of delivering a much more rounded *UFC* experience.

This all-encompassing experience starts with the *UFC* roster and, given the fact that EA has to keep its hands off the company's talent, it could be one of *UFC 2010*'s biggest boons. Over 100 prolific *UFC* fighters will grace the Octagon this year and, unlike last year, none will be made from the in-game creation mode, every fighter will be fully rendered and many motion captured to ensure their individual style and look translate to the in-game experience. Dravinski explains: "We wanted to give players the best experience possible and a big strength of *UFC* is the size of its roster, so we wanted to get as many of them in as possible. It wasn't easy, though,

as these guys live all over the world so we had to send photographers all over to make sure we got all the reference material we needed. It took a lot of global organisation and collaboration to get it done but *UFC* were great and gave us everything we needed."

As fans of the *SmackDown* series will be aware, Japanese dev Yuke's often goes that extra mile to ensure a level of finite detail that might not be appreciated by all but will delight the sport's hardcore following. That same attention to detail was evident in the demo we witnessed, as Mike Swick

squared off against Paulo Thiago. Everyone from the commentary team of Joe Rogan and Mike Goldberg to the 'Veteran Voice of the Octagon', Bruce Buffer, are present and correct (for those of you wondering, the legendary 'Buffer 180' does make its debut this year) but that's no real surprise. What was pleasing was to see that even the subtle pre and post-fight customs had been included, such as fighters' T-shirts and baseball caps being slung on for the announcement of the official verdict. Not a huge improvement, admittedly, but tie that together with new referees, real trainers and, of course, the jiggling Octagon Girls and you have a product that feels much more realistic before you even try out the revised fighting mechanics.

Aesthetics aside, the fighting mechanic is where the biggest changes are to come. If competitors are to look like they do in real life it's important that they fight like them as well, so, rather than being tied to just two of a possible six fighting styles, players can create individual move sets from numerous MMA disciplines including recently added styles such as Sambo, Karate and Greco-Roman Wrestling. This will make for a much more varied experience when it comes to both the standing and ground game, as will the inclusion of a new 'Sway System'. Last year's game was lambasted for its lack of such a system, as you would often be left open to a series of blows while engaging in close combat but now upper body and head movement allows for quick dodging of attacks. Sways, leans and ducks are all

PREVIEW



UFC is certainly fighting hard to win the battle for best visuals.

> ways in which to turn defence into attack but, as with much of the new combat in *Undisputed 2010*, it's often a case of risk and reward. You might just lean out of the way of one blow and into the path of an oncoming strike, flattening you for a 'flash' KO. With EA already revealing that it will be using a hybrid of its popular *Fight Night* fighting system in *MMA*, these kinds of tweaks are essential for *UFC* to have an intuitive feel.

The first game was commended for translating a very complex sport from arena to console. However, due to the nuances of the sport, a complex

with new moves. We've given people the tools to do much more if they want to."

With the addition of sways and leans to the standing game it was important for the ground game to evolve as well. With the confirmation of double the amount of submissions and the introduction of a new targeting system, action on the mat is going to be a completely different prospect. Whereas in the previous game submissions were very much a staged process where you would simply transition from various static states with no real indication of who was winning, a new system now gives you a visual

recently incorporated 'flash' submissions. Those in the know will also appreciate the addition of fighters' signature submissions – such as BJ Penn's arm tap – to ensure an additional level of authenticity. Educated fighters might also be pleased to learn that the clunky button-mashing system that could be used previously to break submissions has been cast by the wayside in favour of more elegant stick rotation.

During the unveil, the team was keen to address some of the complaints levelled at the first game by confirming that the cage will no longer be a static object and can be interacted with. You can hold your opponent against the structure while you throw fists or perform takedowns. The cage has the ability to change the direction of a fight depending on how you use it, as does the fighting style you adopt and now, courtesy of the new Southpaw stance, it's possible to change to southpaw at any time by clicking **R3**. Not only does this enable fighters to adopt their true-to-life fighting technique, it also allows you to keep your opponent guessing throughout a bout by switching the dominance of your hands.

Of course, a big issue that arose after the release of *UFC 2009* was online play, with reprehensible types pulling the plug if they lost with no consequence, but despite the problem being rectified by 'the patch' there is much more in store for online combatants this time around. With THQ encouraging camaraderie by

offering the option to form fight camps and leagues to participate in, as well as ranking and champion tracking systems. After training and earning your virtual stripes, your camp can then go online and compete against other fighting factions.

When unchallenged, THQ enjoyed a huge amount of success with *UFC Undisputed 2009* and rightly so, as it successfully managed to re-create a sport some thought too intricate for interactive play. But now, with another big hitter like EA entering the fray, the rules of the game have changed, as it's not just about making improvements on the previous release but ensuring the fighting experience is the best it can possibly be. Given our initial look at the new build of *UFC Undisputed* and the determination of the team, we have every confidence it can succeed. In his closing statement, when asked about the opposition, Dravinski said: "We are very competitive and to us our only competition is ourselves. We don't know what they [EA] are doing and they don't know what we're doing. Our big advantage is that we have Dana White. He demands excellence and having a guy like that around pushes us to be the best we can be and make the best game possible. The need to be number one permeates through his whole organisation and that extends to this game." Let the fight commence.

UFC Undisputed 2010 is being developed by Yuke's. Check the official website for more details: www.ufcundisputed.com

THQ has managed to replicate a sport that some thought was far too intricate for interactive play

control system was inevitable and with the introduction of even more combat modifiers a worry arises that the casual audience might be alienated in favour of hardcore fighting fans. This was a concern we put to Dravinski, who explained that while *UFC 2010* will still be accessible to newcomers it is attempting to add more variety for those willing to experiment. "I think the dynamic of 'easy to pick up but difficult to master' existed in the first game and it remains for this one. We've just added extra levels of depth. The new features are there to encourage you to try to learn them in order to become a better fighter. In the last game the close combat didn't have as much effect as the ranged blows, but with the advent of the sways and leans we've revolutionised the way the game is played. There's less of a tendency to stand back and then suddenly attack, now you can get in close and experiment

representation of what is transpiring. Your opponent's limbs will move as he tries to break the hold and the camera will begin to zoom in the closer you get to earning the victory. You can also switch position mid-submission but, just as with the standing game, this involves risk and reward – you could earn a greater advantage or risk ending up in a worse position, either way it forces your opponent to try to react. We were also privy to the new posture system that allows you to execute multiple submissions from the same position based on posture, this can lead to an assortment of finishes including the

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Twice as many submission holds as there were in *UFC Undisputed 2009*.
- 'Veteran Voice of the Octagon,' Bruce Buffer returns, and brings the legendary 'Buffer 180' with him.
- Brand-new fighting disciplines and fighters' signature moves are included.
- The cage is no longer a static object and can now be used to hammer opponents.

READ ME

We once considered becoming **UFC fighters** until we witnessed all the face punching. There's slightly less violence in games journalism, although it's still pretty tough.

WHITE HEAT

UFC president Dana White

The last game featured classic fights, what is your favourite fight during your tenure at the UFC?

My favourite fight is Frank Trigg versus Matt Hughes 2. It took place at the MGM Grand and was truly one of the best fights I've ever seen.

If you could pair up any two UFC fighters for a showdown, who would it be?

I do it all the time, the great thing about UFC is that we can do that. Unlike boxing where everyone wants to see Manny Pacquiao versus Floyd Mayweather, but they can't make the fight, here if people want to see the fight, I'll make the fights.

Are you in the game again?

Yeah, I'm in there, we've tried to make this thing as real as possible so when you're playing the game it feels like you're actually watching UFC with all the elements there, me included.

Do you think the game has opened up a whole new audience for UFC?

Hell yeah, it's such a great marketing tool. People all over the world are playing this game that have never seen UFC, but as they're playing they are learning about the various submissions and holds as well as who the fighters are. That's why keeping it as real as possible is very important to us.

When the first game was being made did you make certain demands about what you wanted to see in there?

We were very involved in making the game but the great thing about THQ is that they are so dedicated that they actually started taking Jujitsu and Mau Thai classes to make sure they were getting it right.

Which fighter is the best at the game?

That's a good question because they're all pretty good. When they start to train all they do is train, eat, sleep and play videogames, so they've got a lot of time to practise.

Do the fighters ever complain about their stats in the game?

Oh yeah, I've had them moaning that they think their guy is too weak or too slow. Trust me I've heard it all.

Why Brock Lesnar for the cover this year?

Because Lesnar is the heavyweight champion, he's one of the most recognisable guys in the world. People love him and hate him but what he's accomplished in such a short time is amazing.

What do you think of EA's game?

I think EA is the 'Johnny Come Lately', the 'me too' of the videogame business. We talked to EA and I quote this is what they said: "It's not a real sport, those aren't real athletes and we'd never make a game like that." Now we come out with a successful game and all of a sudden it's a real sport because they saw some money in it.

How do you think the arrival of MMA will affect your game?

I don't think it's going to affect us, we're the brand and we started this sport. Before they told us they're not interested in the sport and now they think they can make a better videogame? Forget it, they're in it for the money.

Can UFC ever be as successful as wrestling and boxing?

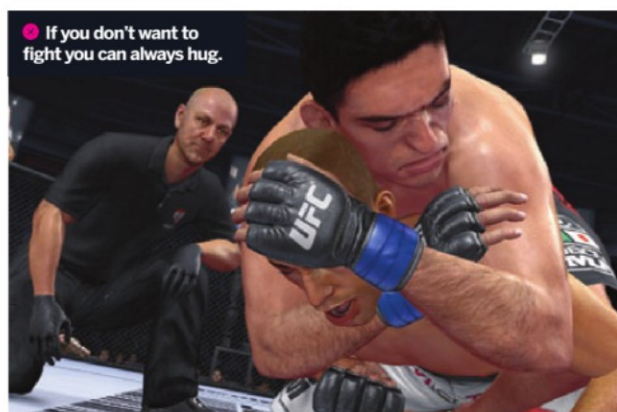
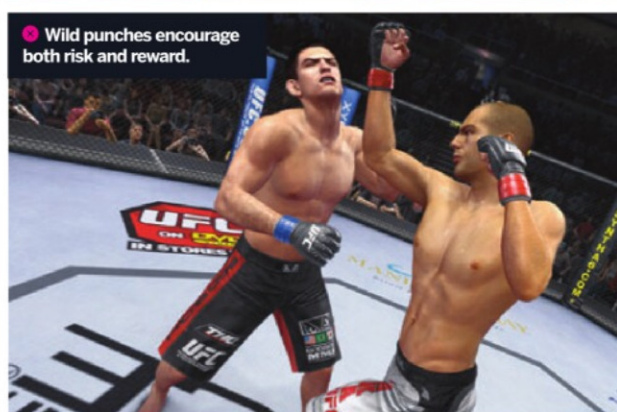
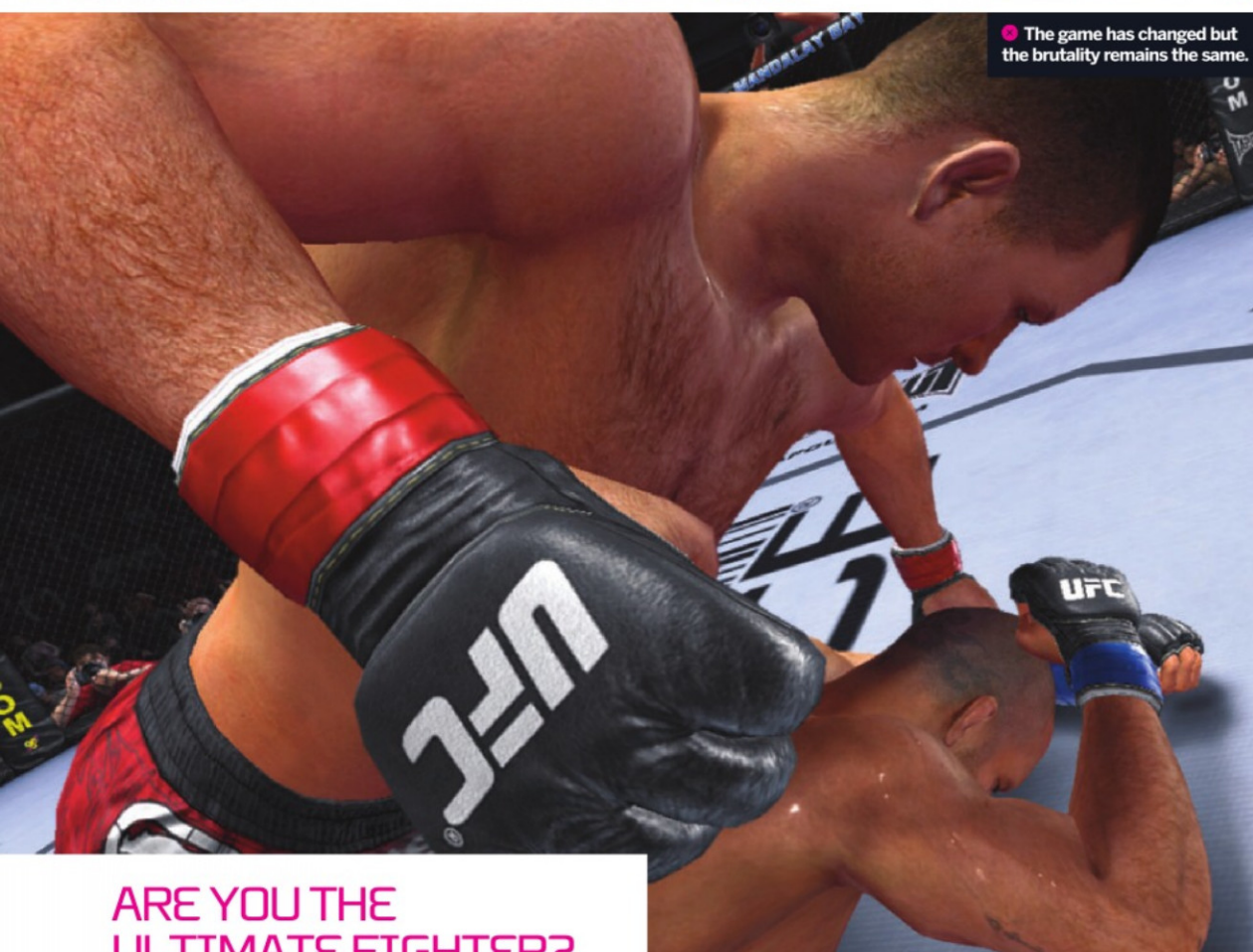
So many people have tried to come out and compete with us, like Donald Trump and CBS, but the reality is that we really know what we're doing – that's why we've been in business for over 20 years.

Is UFC the new thing as far as videogames are concerned?

You know people like all sorts of different games, such as shooting and racing games, but if you like fighting games – you're going to like it. We have the most innovative fighting game out there.

If you could bring any other athlete in from any other sport, who would it be?

You know you just can't change from another sport to UFC, there are lots of people trying it but if you think you can just walk in here and compete forget it. James Toney is chasing me to try to get a shot but a lot of people are just after money, like EA Sports. They don't give a shit about mixed martial arts, they just want the money.



ARE YOU THE ULTIMATE FIGHTER?

UFC tries a change of career

RUMOUR HAS BEEN rife that the new career mode would follow the template of the UFC's famous TV show *The Ultimate Fighter*, and why not as the format seems perfect for the game mode – progress from an unknown hopeful to a fully fledged UFC fighter, learning new techniques and taking on challengers along the way. However, while THQ isn't willing to confirm whether *The Ultimate Fighter* will be integrated into the game, a few details were offered up concerning the various modes you'll be able to compete in:

The Game Is Watching You

This system applies to your career progression and tracks your every action and uses this info to dictate in-game commentary, opponent intelligence and career progression. Based on your credibility it will also determine what sponsorships you'll be offered and how others react to you.

Title And Title Defence

Standard stuff really. Fight through one of the UFC's five official weight classes to earn and defend the strap. Then in Title Defence mode you'll have to fend off contenders and complete milestone challenges.

Tournament Mode

To prove yourself a true badass you'll have to emerge victorious from the UFC tournaments. Individual and team-based events are available involving a mix of arcade-style showdowns and simulation play.



● No shortage of blood in this game as *Hunted* is as brutal as they come.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

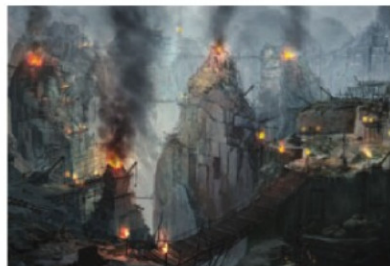
Hunted: The Demon's Forge

Merging the D&D and Gears Of War generations

THE FALLOUT FACTOR

Brian Fargo's name brings expectation

WHEN THE FOUNDER of Interplay, maker of *Fallout*, teams up with Bethesda, maker of *Fallout 3*, heads turn. InXile's founder Brian Fargo was one of the men who first got Interplay started with games like *The Bard's Tale* and *Wasteland*. He would continue as president of the company as *Fallout* and *Fallout 2* were also produced. In 2002 he formed InXile Entertainment and remade *The Bard's Tale* for PS2, Xbox and PC as an action game. Suffice to say that Fargo and Bethesda feels like a pretty good fit given their respective histories and a game like *Hunted* should also fit well into the Bethesda family.



InXile hasn't been on holiday or anything. It's just been spending the last few years getting to grips with the Unreal 3 engine. Some disappointments of projects being dropped by publishers in the last few years led the team to turn their attentions to something of a passion project instead. Like so many other game developers, the guys at InXile Entertainment, famous for their work on *The Bard's Tale* among other action RPG fare, were forged in the fires of *Dungeons & Dragons* and that is the direction it chose for *Hunted: The Demon's Forge*.

Hunted follows the adventures of two warriors of fortune, Elara and Caddoc. These hardened fighters have struck a deal with a spirit named Seraphine to search the town of Dyfed for crystals that are of value to the apparition. The only trouble is that Dyfed appears to be deserted of human life. It is soon made apparent that the citizens of this town have been the victims of a demonic infestation and suddenly what we find

ourselves in is a classic bit of dungeon exploration. The big difference between *Hunted* and what you might traditionally think of as a dungeon crawler is that this one takes its action cues more from *Gears Of War* or *Uncharted 2* than from *Diablo*.

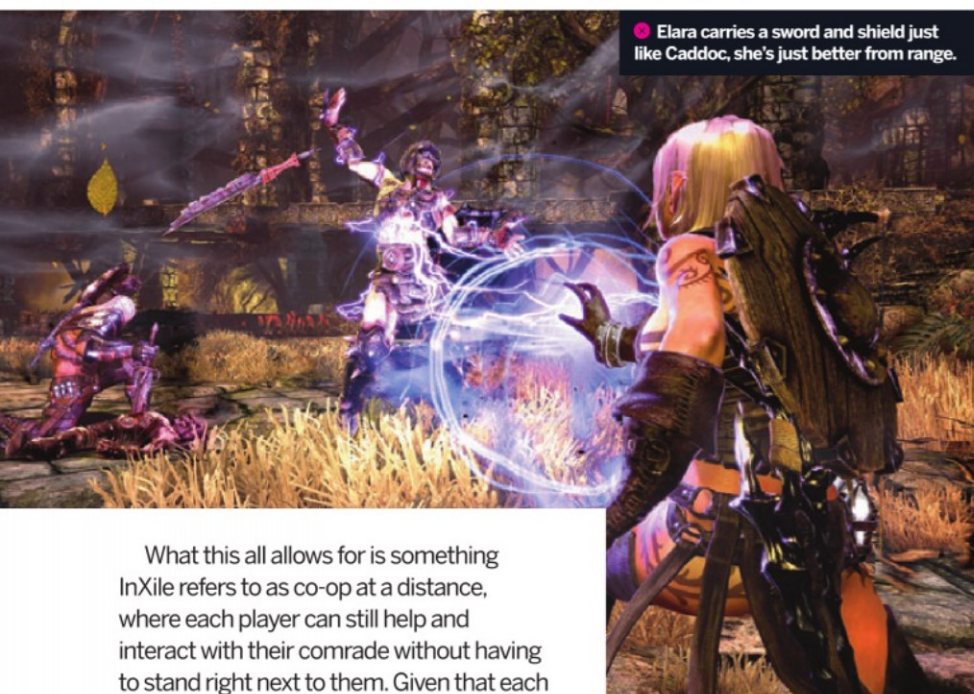
That's a very deliberate choice on the part of the development team who wanted to make a game that on the one hand reflected their passion for dungeon crawlers, but had gameplay that would appeal more easily to the current generation of gamers. While *Hunted* contains more than its fair share of swords, sorcery, elves, orcs, monsters and caverns it is also a very in-your-face action title that wastes no time in getting you in the thick of the battle. Its characters reflect this, too, each having the ability to

use magic, but utilising it in a very direct and attacking fashion.

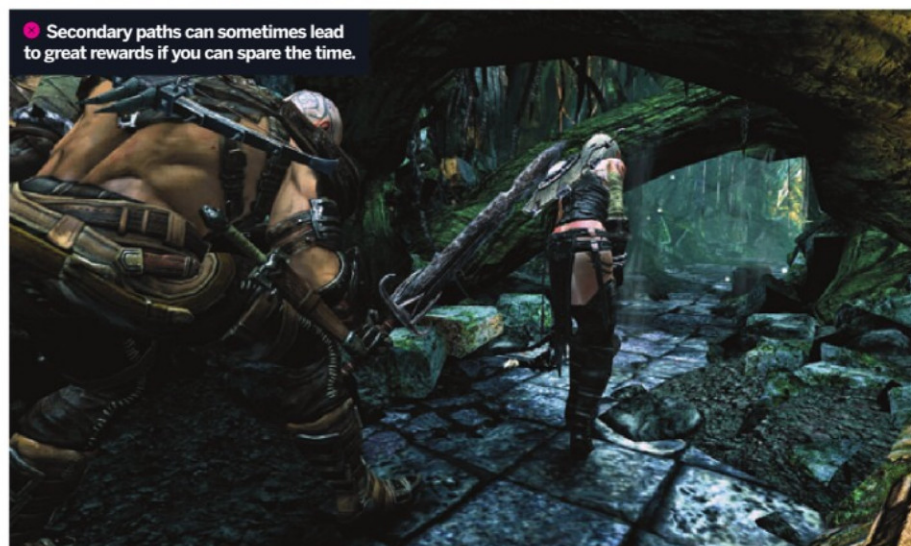
Throwing magical spells like fireballs is one such aggressive form of spell-casting, but you can also imbue your weapons with magic such as shooting ice arrows that freeze an enemy on contact to be shattered by a melee attack. You can also use your magic in a co-operative fashion to make your attacks even more potent. For instance, using a fire spell on your partner will make them much more powerful for a short period. Doing so for Elara, for instance, will make her melee attacks much more effective. Having said that there are also spells specifically designed to make your partner's life a little easier, such as levitate spells that make targets float around for easy distance kills.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A third-person action title in the vein of *Gears Of War*, but with swords instead.
- The lead female character doesn't appear to be wearing any underwear.
- All the classic look and feel of a traditional dungeon crawler with modern trappings.
- Intelligently used co-op functions that should really make the gameplay more fun.



Elara carries a sword and shield just like Caddoc, she's just better from range.



Secondary paths can sometimes lead to great rewards if you can spare the time.

What this all allows for is something InXile refers to as co-op at a distance, where each player can still help and interact with their comrade without having to stand right next to them. Given that each character has their own speciality (bow for Elara, sword for Caddoc) that makes a lot of sense. It also makes sense that things such as resuscitating your partner can be done by simply throwing a health vile rather than having to walk over and tap them on the shoulder (although pouring whiskey on them like in *Saints Row* is kinda cool).

So *Hunted: The Demon's Forge* looks like an interesting mix of contemporary third-person shooter action with some heavy melee mechanics added all wrapped up in a dungeon crawling bow. It's certainly something a little bit different and could offer a refreshing co-op experience against the likes of *Army Of Two* and so on. Be sure to pick up the next issue of **Play** where we'll be speaking exclusively to the team behind the game.

Hunted is being developed by InXile Entertainment. You can find out much more about it at www.inxile-entertainment.com

READ ME

Hunted developer InXile Entertainment was supposed to be making *Hei\$t* for Codemasters, but it didn't work out. The game is now missing, presumed dead.

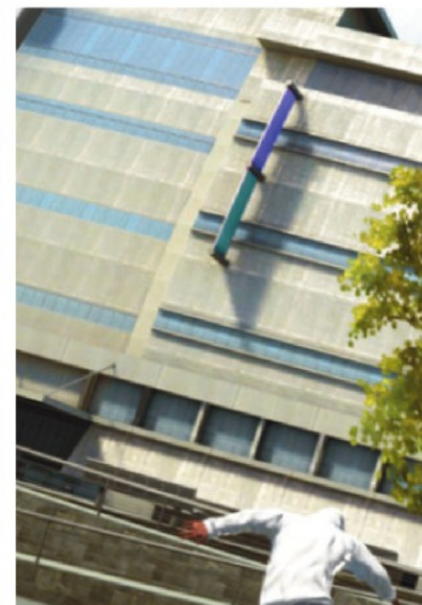
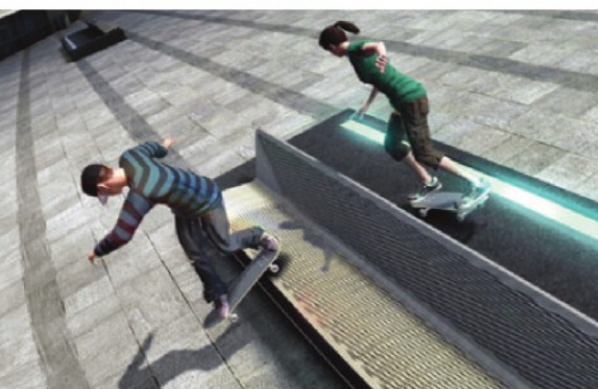


Casting spells on each other leads to some interesting and potent results.

PREVIEW



Design a logo for your team and make sure everyone wears it online.



RELEASE DATE: 28 MAY

Skate 3

A little more conversation, a little more action please

Tony Hawk: Ride is behind us. It was a nice idea, but in its first attempt at least it was a failure. In all honesty we're sorry for it, because the *Tony Hawk* titles have a glorious heritage and we'd love to see it compete on the big stage again, but ultimately EA's *Skate* is the top dog now and it richly deserves its spot. EA Black Box is a studio full of skateboard

make it the most accessible and engrossing wheel to date. In this respect it is clearly following the lead of the community. Features such as Skate.Reel, Graphics Creator and online play were all very good, but were not integrated right into the centre of the experience. It was up to players to connect those dots and make them sing, but now *Skate 3* is doing that for all of us.

EA Black Box isn't trying to reinvent the wheel for *Skate 3*, just make it the most accessible and engrossing wheel to date

enthusiasts working on a passion project, not just a mandated annual sports game and that has shone through from day one. *Skate 3* is the natural evolution of that journey and really underlines why *Ride*'s poor performance doesn't matter a jot.

EA Black Box isn't trying to reinvent the wheel for *Skate 3*, just

It's all about team play whether online or offline, playing competitively or co-operatively. If you play through the main story mode solo you'll be recruiting AI skaters to your brand as you reach for stardom. If you play online you can share the experience with friends. One nice touch is that if you

do play with friends, their skaters will be saved to your game and if at some later date you decide to play offline they will still be there in your team, but as AI companions. EA Black Box has suggested they should even behave a little like their real-life counterparts, but how that will be achieved is unclear.

If you don't have any friends that play *Skate* then *Skate 3* is offering some team matchmaking for online play that will help you find the kind of like-minded skaters you'll hopefully fit well with. All you need to do is decide whether you prefer street skating or parks or Hall Of Meat gameplay or whatever and find people that feel the same way. That should help cut down on being teamed up with completely incompatible players and perhaps even help the community grow tighter than ever.

While online play is currently locked to six players total (three on

each team) you can have a team of up to 15 skaters online and can keep track of your team's performance online via the new Skate.Feed feature. That should help you keep tabs on your wins and losses against your rivals as well as seeing who your star performers are.

Probably the biggest new feature is the skate park creation that comes to *Skate 3* as a ramp-up of the park editing we saw in the last game. You can now create entire parks from scratch as well as truly awe-inspiring mega ramps to really challenge your friends and enemies in the *Skate* world as you share them online for everyone to download. Throw in the world that Black Box has already created and the inevitable DLC support that has made *Skate 2* such a continued joy and you've got one hell of a package to bite into. By keeping things simple and holding firmly to the core mechanics and principles that have made *Skate* such a breath of fresh air, this new instalment should be the pick of the bunch.

EA Black Box has been the home of this skating revolution and continues with *Skate 3*. Check out regular blogs, videos and more at skate.ea.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- More of the same superb gamepad control that has made *Skate* great.
- A smattering of new tricks that should keep hardcore skaters happy.
- A brand-new, friendlier city with all-new spots to dominate and explore.
- Full online community and offline gaming integration to spice things up.

READ ME

Skate 3 is promising full body control for the Hall Of Meat bails this time around, which can only mean even more hilarious videos to watch.



Port Calverton is your new home and a much friendlier city to skate.



The darkslide is one of *Skate 3*'s headline new tricks, but demands skill.



Work as a team to rack up big scores and demolish the competition.



New beginner difficulty settings will make some tricks easier to pull off.

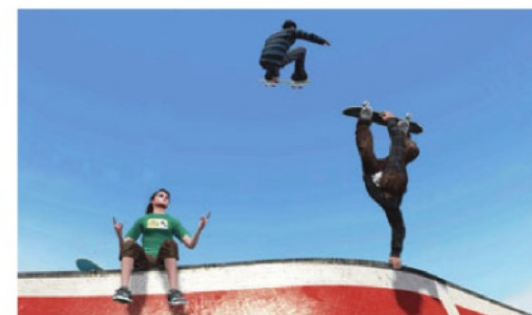


It looks like there will be even more customisation options for your skater.

ROSTER MONSTERS

More stars join the Skate ranks

SKATE HAS NEVER really been about the star names even though it is chock-full of them. Danny Way and PJ Ladd were the star draws in the first game in terms of names, but the real star has always been the player him/herself. The supporting cast of pro skaters have been there to help develop players' knowledge of skating techniques and to add that much-needed colour to the career progression. *Skate 3* adds to that colour with even more big-name stars from the world of skateboarding. Dan Drehobl brings with him plenty of tricks and devil-may-care attitude, while Joey Brezinski is a more technical skater and master of the manual.



PREVIEW



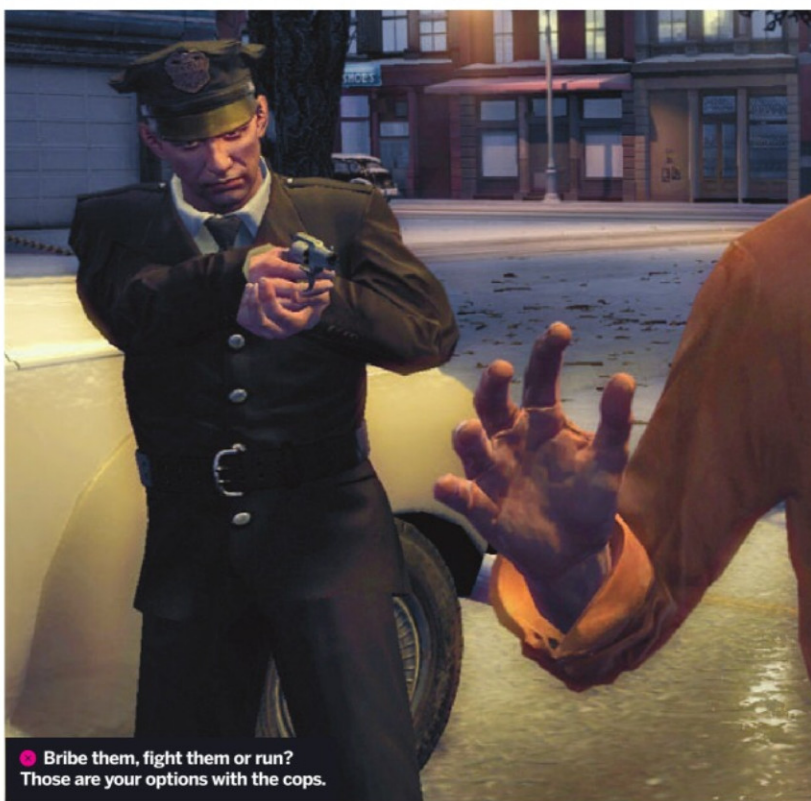
● As you can see, snow cakes on the cars and has a massive effect on handling.



GET REAL

Could realism go too far?

REALISM HAS ITS place in games, but sometimes it can sap all the fun out of an experience. At present, with *Mafia II* still some way from release we're still waiting to find out how things will balance out. In terms of combat and world exploration its realism and attention to detail should make *Mafia II* a lot of fun. However, a strict cop system with complex wanted levels and traffic violations could frustrate many. It's going to be a tough thing to balance and may ultimately depend on your personal tastes more than anything else.



● Bribe them, fight them or run? Those are your options with the cops.



● All strung up with no place to go, but at least there's a boxing match on.



● The wanted system in *Mafia II* is aggressive, but fair. Something to watch for.

UPDATE



There's a robust-looking cover system in *Mafia* now, but tough enemies.



All the cut-scenes in *Mafia II* are handled by the in-game engine.



RELEASE DATE: JUNE

Mafia II

Like it's here to amuse you?

With *Heavy Rain* in the bag and its effect still reverberating around the **Play** team (be it positive or negative), we began to think about what was coming next that might offer something similar in terms of the weight of its storytelling and character. Again and again the answer was *Mafia II*. 2K Czech's long-awaited sequel has been simmering in the background

Where the storytelling becomes most interesting is in the way every aspect of the game is brought to bear to make it as engrossing and immersive as possible. For instance, the beginning of the game is a bleak and desperate time for *Mafia II*'s hero Vito Scaletta having returned injured from duty in World War II with nothing. To bring that message home the atmosphere is also bleak. You'll spend a lot of time around the

will be covering there will be all sorts of weather conditions and indeed seasons represented, but they will all change and adapt in scripted ways. It's only the immediate things that are truly dynamic and responsive to your actions, while the wider world remains unconcerned by you. Vito's wider world stature is similarly insignificant, forced to work as a hired gun for the local mafia families for lack of other options. He has nothing and is nothing as the game begins, but then his rise to made man is the heart of this story. If our exposure to the world of America's Forties crime underworld has taught us anything it's that this won't be a happy climb up the ladder of power.

It's not all about the central plot, though, as *Mafia II* promises to be full of side missions that spin off from the main story, but again these are tightly controlled and have been made to add real depth to the story rather than being mere distractions.

You don't need to pursue a side quest if you don't want to and it won't take anything much away from the experience. If you do you'll be rewarded with more back story on the characters involved and perhaps a deeper look at the background politics of the mafia families in Empire Bay.

It all adds to the realism and the depth of the world that 2K Czech has created. It's not just about the small environmental details or the period objects that give the world some colour. There's a deep physics system here, too, that seeps into every corner of the game. Thin surfaces such as wood or glass will splinter or shatter under fire and offer poor cover protection. Guns also behave in realistic ways and shotguns and Tommy guns hit you with plenty of recoil to force you to re-aim. That's going to give you some grief we would imagine, but *Mafia* was never about giving it to you easy and *Mafia II* won't be any different. Ultimately the struggle and challenge may be its most realistic representation of mob life.

He has nothing and is nothing as the game begins, but then his rise to made man is the heart of this story

nicely, but its commitment to narrative and close attention to period detail definitely sets it apart from your average sandbox adventure. While it may have all the freedom of a typical open-world experience and its fair share of interactivity, neither of these things is 2K Czech's main focus.

poorer parts of Empire Bay, such as Sand Island in the winter, with grey skies and thick snow. And it's much more than just aesthetic, with snow and ice on the roads having a major impact on the performance and handling of vehicles.

2K Czech has made it clear that in the ten years or so that *Mafia II*

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Highly detailed game world that faithfully recreates Forties urban America.
- A familiar mafia tale, but with really interesting characters and smart dialogue.
- Real-world physics and destructible environments add to the realism.
- A no-nonsense sandbox game that could really shake up the genre.

READ ME

Thus far Vito's story seems like a mix of Ray Liotta in *Goodfellas* and Al Pacino in *The Godfather*. Not bad places to start really.

2K Czech continues to be the custodian of the *Mafia* brand. There's plenty of images, videos and more at www.2kgames.com/mafia2

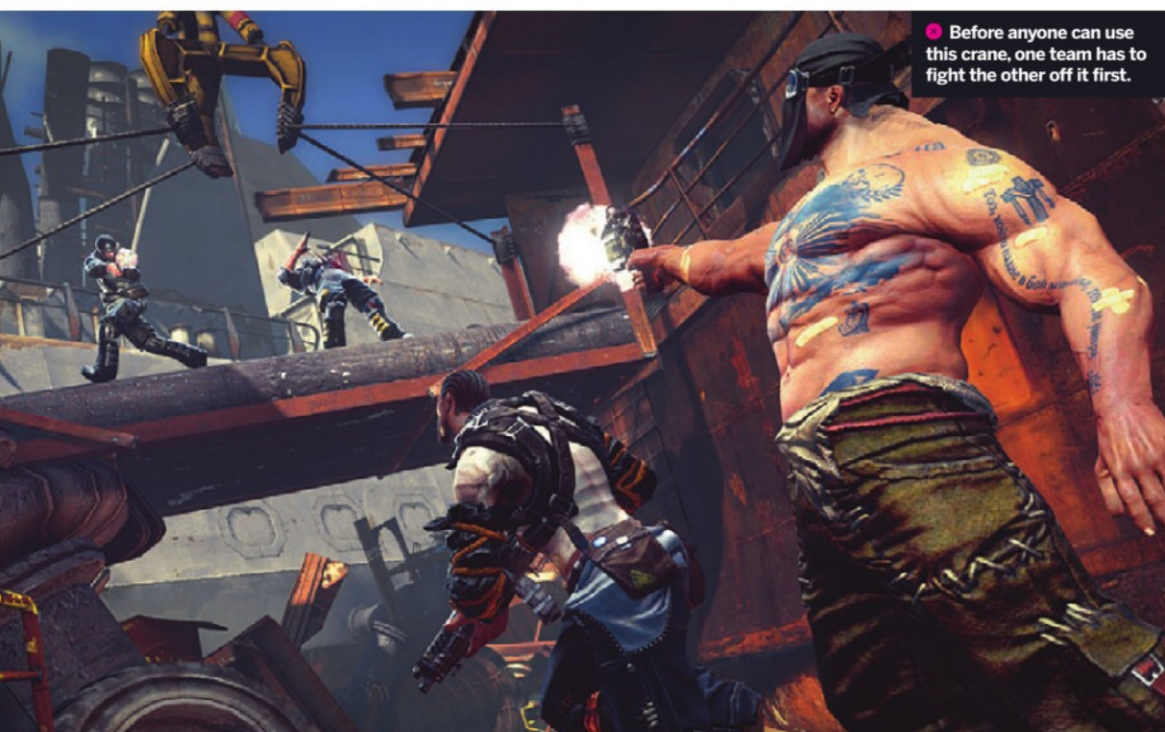
PREVIEW



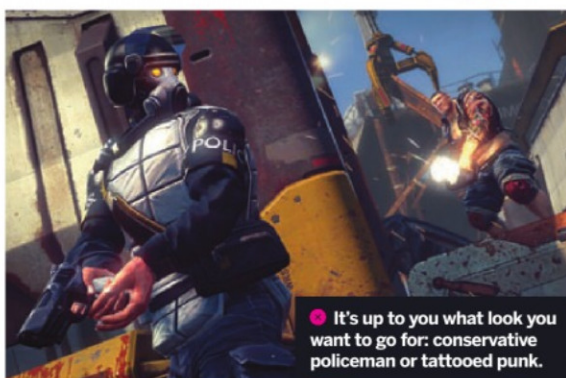
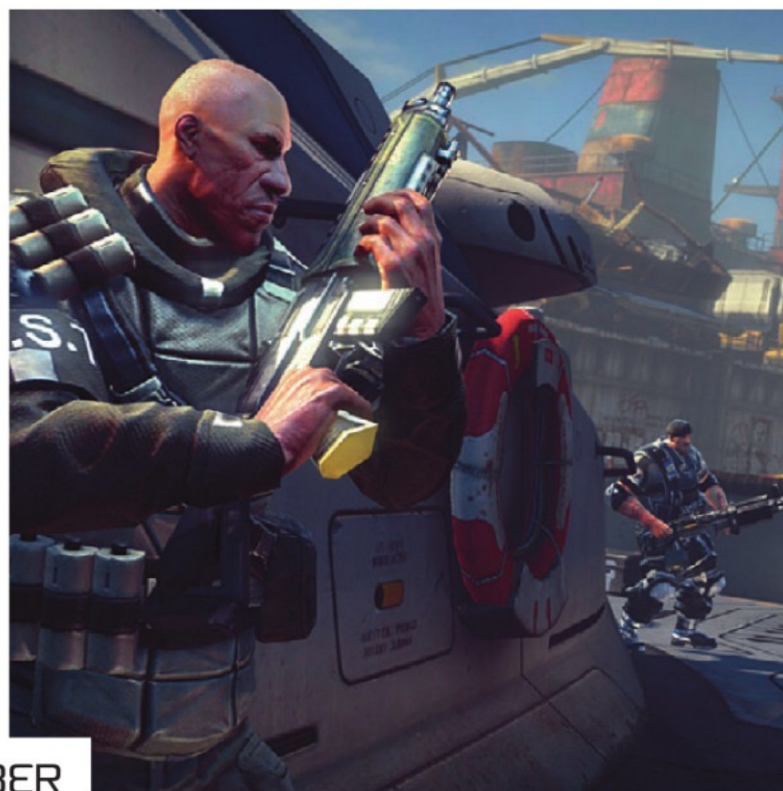
● *Brink* takes place on the Ark, a huge, isolated city in open ocean. It has some strange architecture.



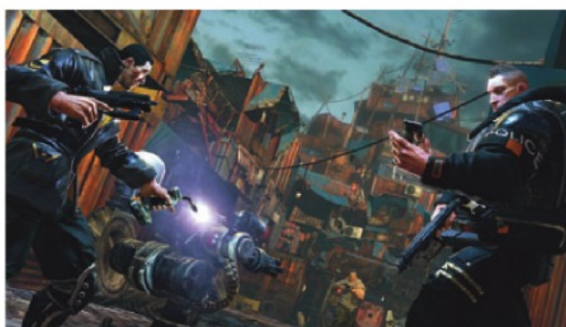
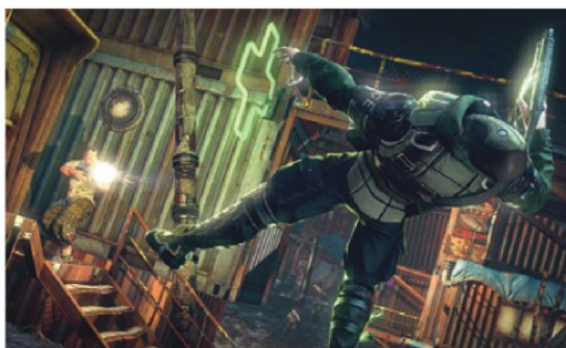
● Bigger characters are tougher and can carry heavier weapons, but can't do much *Mirror's Edge*-style acrobatics.



● Before anyone can use this crane, one team has to fight the other off it first.



● It's up to you what look you want to go for: conservative policeman or tattooed punk.



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Brink

Trying our best to be objective

I don't care about multiplayer shooters because they're inaccessible and no one plays as a team. Why should I care about this one?

Because Splash Damage has taken specific measures to ensure that everyone does play as a team.

I've heard that before...

True. Pretty much every developer says that about their team-based multiplayer modes, and we were sceptical at first, but there are ideas in *Brink* that really could make a difference. Splash Damage may have cracked one of the biggest inherent problems with online gaming.

How? I've heard that before, too.

Well, the thing that we think might make all the difference is the

objective wheel, a radial menu that can be called up at any time and gives you a choice of up to six different objectives that are automatically tailored to what's taking place at that given moment.

What? Like, 'defend your flag' and 'capture the enemy flag'?

Some of them are a bit like that, but they're generally more specific and more varied, mainly because the maps aren't just maps, they're structured mission scenarios. For example, one team might have to escort a maintenance droid into the other team's territory, but the enemy team is not the only obstacle standing in the way. There's a whole series of environmental obstacles, too, each requiring different methods and skills to overcome.

So how might that particular scenario pan out?

Well, the two most important objectives at every stage in that scenario would be staying close to the maintenance droid, which needs protecting and won't move without a player near it, and clearing obstacles out of the way, like gates and debris and such. There's even a point where you need to repair a crane then use it to lift the droid over an obstacle. Other players will get to choose from objectives that support the player attempting the main objective.

What's your incentive for doing the main objectives, rather than just killing the enemy lots?

They earn you a lot more experience points, sometimes as much as 20 times what you would earn for simply



● Characters will talk to each other during the match, giving *Brink* more personality than most multiplayer titles.



killing the enemy. Plus we reckon it might not just be a question of incentive and reward. We suspect that the way the game is mission-structured even in multiplayer might

Everyone should get their chance to put their own particular speciality to the test in accomplishing a high-earning objective

help instil an objective-focused mind-set in players.

So aren't team-mates going to end up fighting among themselves over who gets to do the main objectives and earn the big experience points?

This is one thing we're a little doubtful

about, as it seems to work on a first come, first served basis, and we can see that causing some intra-team resentment. But many of the main objectives require a player of a

specific class to perform them so, while you can change your class mid-game by visiting one of the command consoles placed about each map, it seems possible that everyone should get their chance to put their own particular speciality to the test in accomplishing a high-earning objective.

Are you saying it's almost like a single-player campaign that can be played co-operatively by both sides of the war?

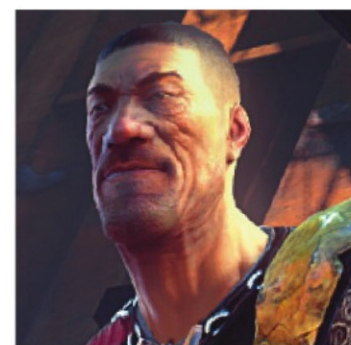
That certainly seems to be what Splash Damage is aiming for with *Brink*, yes. Every scenario is designed for 16 combatants and if there are fewer than 16 human players, even if it's just you on your own, the difference will be made up by AI bots smart enough to choose and complete their own objectives. This means that players can drop in and out of the game without disrupting the balance of the match, or the narrative of the scenario.

Brink is being developed by Splash Damage. Check the website for more details: www.splashdamage.com

BRINK OF AN EYE

Looks aren't everything, but...

THERE'S NO DENYING that *Brink*'s art style is unlike anything seen in a game before. *Borderlands* might have a similar hand-drawn, post-apocalyptic look to it, but *Brink*'s exaggerated caricatures really set it apart. The art style is inspired by hyperrealism, which is an extension of photorealism where certain details are accentuated and exaggerated to striking effect. It's what reality would look like if you looked at its reflection in the back of a giant spoon.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Missions, as opposed to matches, give you more of a sense of purpose.
- Choosing your own objectives gives you incentive to pursue them.
- Clever integration between single-player and multiplayer modes.
- Has much more personality than most multiplayer games.

READ ME

Unlike some developers, Splash Damage has embraced the complications of PS3 development, describing multi-core development as 'the future.'

PREVIEW



Physicality still plays a big part in the game.



This is a scene we can safely say we do not want to see in real life.



Our hosts were keen to point out how hard they've worked on the confetti.



Shots feel a lot more punty – or pingier, if you will.



Ah, the Dutch. Football's forgotten.



RELEASE DATE: 30 APRIL

2010 FIFA World Cup

They think it's all over! Well it's not. Get over it

It feels like a lifetime ago that we last encountered EA releasing its FIFA games on a bi-yearly schedule. It wasn't, but it feels that way, if only because the last time we had a World Cup game it was an absolute farce – and since then EA has got its act together and released some of the best football games in recent memory. But it's just because we have the memories of cynical cash-in World Cup and European Championship games that we approached the announcement of *2010 World Cup* with some trepidation.

After some good hands-on time with the game we can report... that it's a lot like *FIFA 10*, just with a few slight tweaks. We didn't have enough time with it to seriously analyse every aspect of the game and how it balances out, but some changes were evident. Lobbed throughballs are no longer game-winners *every single time*, meaning the endless top corner volleys of Juventus's Amauri are a thing of the past. This is something that makes us happy. Goalies no longer feel the need to charge out and hack anyone in their way down just because someone went near the ball in the defensive half of the pitch. One area feeling like it had a definite

change that we weren't so sure about was shooting, which felt a lot more arcadey than in the last FIFA title. While floated shots, placed efforts and scuffed nonsense were still present, it was noticeable that a great deal more shots than before are absolute missiles, completely pinging from the player's boot and often heading at least in the vague direction of the top corner. While we can't say for certain right now from our limited time with the game, it does seem as if this might well be a conceit to make the game more accessible to the mass market, such is EA's current strategy to push the game to all '2 billion' football fans in the world.

Presentation is a big angle for *2010 World Cup* and, frankly, it has to be. Without the proper look and feel to the game, it wouldn't be an event – it would just be another football game. What we saw was a good stab at capturing the atmosphere of what makes a World Cup so special. As the

EA types talking us through the game were keen to point out, EA's pushed for a carnival atmosphere and presentation akin to that of TV broadcasts. Logos and other such graphics are the official FIFA ones, cameras cut away to close-up sections of the crowd to show fans' delight/despair and on every other screen you'll see that... *thing* they're using as the mascot for the tournament. Facial likenesses have been overhauled from *FIFA 10* – while that doesn't mean Gambia's Njogu Demba-Nyren will look exactly like he does in real life, it does mean the superstars of world football have been made to look more real. Highlighted examples we were shown were those of Rio Ferdinand, who just looks a bit more human, and Peter Crouch, who actually looks *human* this time. Other subtler changes like lighting and grass texturing were mentioned, but these have very little impact on the game itself if we're honest, and are unlikely to

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Cleaner, crisper visuals with more realistic-looking players.
- You can indeed win the World Cup with England. Or Gambia, if you want.
- It's the same *FIFA 10* we loved, just with a few nips and tucks.
- The grass looks better, which is something we've always craved.



IN-DEPTH

affect much beyond someone remarking "oh, it looks a bit better than before".

Oh, there's that tournament in there, too. 199 teams from the FIFA body are available to play as – so not just the nations who qualified for the World Cup. Full progression from qualification through to the finals is available, meaning you can rewrite history and take Demba-Nyren and co to the trophy, should you so wish. And you should, if you include *Championship Manager* legend Chernobamba in the squad, too. The game will, shockingly enough, be a full and frank recreation of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. That's about all the analysis you need for this part, let's be honest.

An 'accessible' attitude prevails throughout the game, but don't take this as a criticism. Let's not forget that from a purely fiscal perspective, the World Cup is a bit of a cash cow and everything can be branded to hell in order to milk a bit more dough from the impoverished masses. So why not do *FIFA 10* up a bit, attach the official branding and release it? There are going to be some far more cynical tie-ins in the build up to the competition through other mediums, so the chance to play an already-good football game, a bit spruced up, isn't one we'd turn our noses up at.

2010 FIFA World Cup is being developed by EA Canada. Check out www.fifa.easports.com for more details.

READ ME

It's been 44 years since England last (and first) won the World Cup, and we're willing to put money on them winning/not winning the trophy again this year (delete as appropriate).

● Ballack hits another one of his efficient German shots.



● EA isn't afraid to use the licence as much as humanly possible.



● As you can see, Buffon does indeed look like a goon.



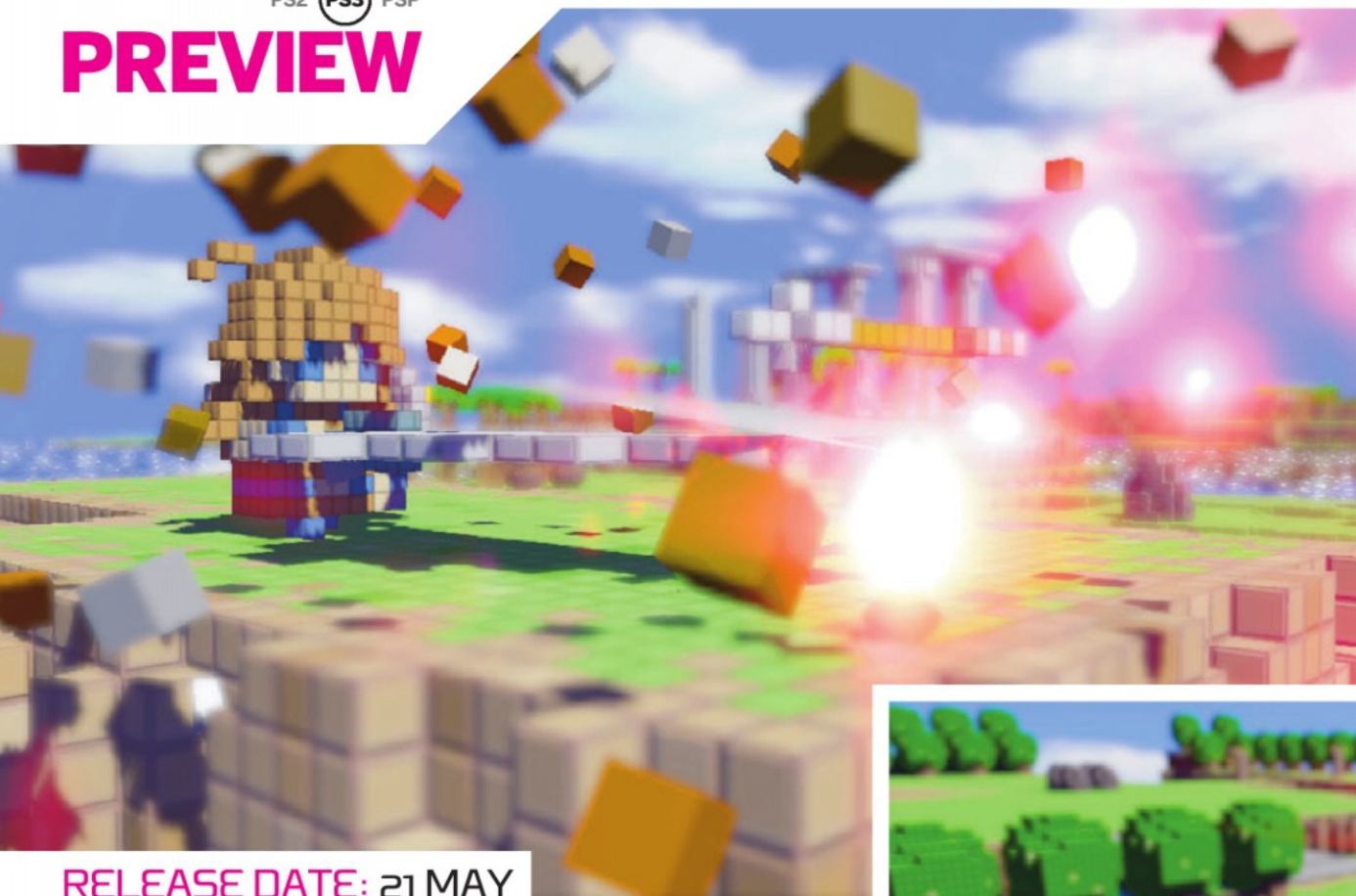
COMMON TATER

Why get the best, when you can get the worst?

ONE MASSIVE DISAPPOINTMENT was evident on playing *World Cup* – the commentary team on board consists of Clive Tyldesley and Andy Townsend, otherwise known as 'The Worst Commentary Team Of All Time'. We're hopeful there's an option to switch the language of the play-by-play to one we don't understand, otherwise we're just going to be playing the game on mute. Or we can hope that the main commentary hasn't been recorded yet by Martin Tyler and Andy Gray. Say what you want about them – at least they're not Andy 'Tactics Truck' Townsend and Clive 'Clueless' Tyldesley.

PREVIEW

FIRST LOOK



RELEASE DATE: 21 MAY

3D Dot Game Heroes

Kicking the chickens, old-school

Real heroes dream in 2D. So says *3D Dot Game Heroes* and we're not ones to argue with it. It's exactly this kind of off-kilter humour and attention to the minute details of classic Japanese RPGs that has made this one of our most anticipated games of 2010. However, we were never sure we were going to get it in the UK until SouthPeak picked it up and promised a European release. Now we've even had the chance to play it a little in English and our feelings about it haven't changed.

For a start it's just as charming as we always thought it would be. While clearly an ode to games like *Legend Of Zelda* on the NES, there's an obvious love of the RPG genre and an esteem for its past. Silicon Studio knows all the clichés, uses all of them and makes sure you know that they know it's all a bit silly. It's a game with its tongue firmly planted

in its cheek, but unlike other games of that kind (such as *Matt Hazard*) its core gameplay and features should be enough to carry it, though.

3D Dot Game Heroes isn't exactly groundbreaking in terms of gameplay since its 'four directions of movement, eight directions of attack' model is very limiting, but it has all the tricks of the RPG trade, such as lamps, boomerangs and bosses, that need to be destroyed in stages. The real innovation is the look of the game with its 8-bit design brought to life through the use of 3D blocks for the environment and characters. They waddle around with stunted animation and yet it feels very addictive so far. If you have any retro love in your body you should keep an eye on this PS3 exclusive.

Silicon Studio developed *3D Dot Game Heroes*, but if you want more info it's best to go to the American site at www.3ddotgameheroes.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Wonderful homage to the great RPGs of the 8-bit era such as *Zelda*.
- Smart and funny dialogue between your hero and characters in the world.
- Unique graphical style that adds a welcome nostalgia to playing the game.
- Character creation that will allow you to personalise your experience.

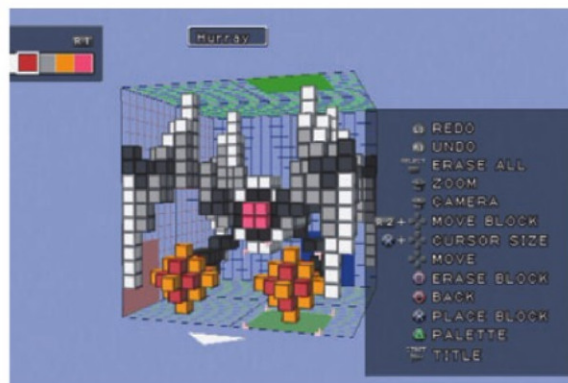
READ ME

3D Dot Game Heroes was published by From Software in Japan, Atlus in the US and now by SouthPeak. It's putting itself about a bit.

Visual puzzles seem to play an important role here, so be very vigilant.



It's the size of your sword that counts, not how you use it according to Silicon Studio.



MISSING LINK

Make the hero of your choice

ONE OF THE great things about *3D Dot Game Heroes* is that you can build your own hero before you begin the game. There are plenty of clever sprites already, but designing your own means you could resurrect some of your favourite retro heroes to save Dotnia. You could even create something rather abstract looking. The files for these heroes are so small you could even share them via email.



You might not know this, but the Flame Temple is full of raging fire!

The Flame Temple is full of raging fire according to this Sage. Who would have thought?

FIRST LOOK



It's the morning after the night before as Harry and Hagrid clean up the mess.



RELEASE DATE: 28 MAY

Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4

Hogging the stage for your entertainment

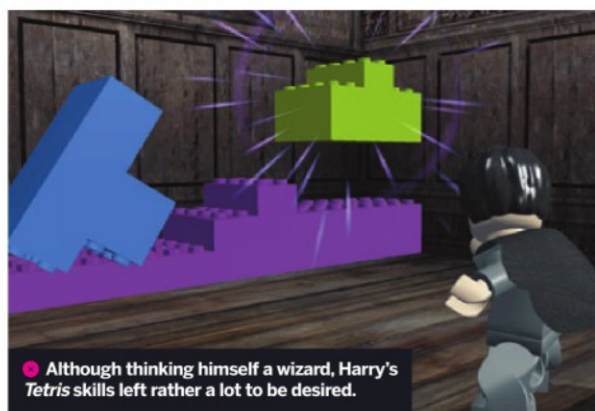
While their ultimate quality has tended to be a little mixed there can be no denying the charm of the *Lego* game series thus far, kicking off with the *Star Wars* trilogies and most recently adapting *Indiana Jones*. The mix of movie nostalgia, classic gameplay and comical animated sequences give them all the ingredients to be great family entertainment. However, *Batman* and *Indiana Jones* haven't proved to be quite as appealing as the original *Star Wars* games and TT Games will be hoping that a little *Harry Potter* magic will be what the franchise needs.

While realism or justification may seem like an odd thing to ask from a *Lego*-based game, the Force powers of *Star Wars* did help make some sense of your abilities in *Lego Star Wars* and made it more fun than its successors. We're hoping that the magic of *Harry Potter* will be used in equally unique and innovative ways to get the most out of its concept. Spells such as Wingardium Leviosa (the levitating charm) should come in pretty handy, for instance.

TT Games has added a much more robust physics system this time around so that you'll be able to use *Lego* bricks as they were intended. This will be the first time

you'll have been able to build with the bricks piece by piece in game. As the game progresses you'll pick up more and more spells to cast, selected from a spell wheel and these will more or less follow the progression of the first four books and films. To get these new spells you will need to go to class and be taught them by one of Hogwarts' talented professors. It all sounds like it could be a bit of good fun, even if we do have to play as some of the least imaginative heroes in history.

The custodians of all things *Lego* and movie licensed, TT Games is unsurprisingly handling this game. See more at ttgames.com



Although thinking himself a wizard, Harry's *Tetris* skills left rather a lot to be desired.

BUILDING A BETTER WORLD

Some major improvement to *Lego Harry Potter*

TT GAMES HASN'T sat on its hands with this adaptation. As well as a well-put-together Hogwarts as your hub world, *Lego Harry Potter* also features some pseudo-RPG elements for learning spells, broom riding and the ability to randomly cast spells on objects to see the results. The results should certainly add another layer of amusement to the experience.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Bringing the magic element back to the *Lego* games should be a winner.
- The *Harry Potter* world promises lots of excellent locations and gameplay.
- The *Potter* movies are ripe for taking the piss, which is a *Lego* tradition now.
- Every time you die Harry's head will fall off, so that's probably a bonus.

READ ME

Lego Harry Potter will be based on the first four books and films, following their plots pretty tightly. Expect the others when the last films hit.

WANNA CYBER?

The galaxy's biggest car planet



CYBERTRON IS ESSENTIALLY a planet-turned-robot factory that was created by an ancient race called the Quintessons. The robots became sentient and rebelled against their slave masters, then ultimately fell into war against each other, which is where the plot of this game comes in.

AXES AND AXELS

Hacking technology, cracking skulls



WHILE RANGED ENERGY weapons do appear in the game, *War For Cybertron* seems to have a greater emphasis in melee combat than previous *Transformers* titles. Most of the *Transformers* are equipped with brutal-looking, hand-to-hand weapons, like this neon battle-axe. This suggests the game might be set a long time ago when Transformer technology was more primitive.

SPACE TRUCKIN'

Not so boxy back home



WAR FOR CYBERTRON is set long before the *Transformers* ever made contact with Earth, so accordingly their vehicles' forms aren't based on Earthly designs. Not closely anyway. Here's a Prime example: instead of his familiar haulage truck form, Optimus becomes this lower, futuristic, much more streamlined truck.

FACE THE ENEMY

Talk about holding a grudge



WHEREVER THERE IS Optimus Prime, there is Megatron who, in this particular iteration, transforms into some sort of flying speedboat with a huge mounted cannon on board. According to *Transformers* lore, the rulership of Cybertron has switched back and forth between these two over a period of millions of years.

RELEASE DATE: JULY

Transformers:
War For Cybertron

While you're still in your Prime

When a company like Activision signs a major licensing deal, it's not about to limit its options to producing a 'game of the movie' each time a movie belonging to the licensed franchise is released. Nope, that just wouldn't be good business. Activision's business model is built around the idea that fans of a franchise will buy a new game based on it every year if given the chance, so, as was the case with the *Spider-Man* franchise, if a period passes by with no movie to piggyback, Activision will happily commission a studio to develop a stopgap.

War For Cybertron is the first of these stopgap games for the *Transformers* franchise, but it's unlikely to be the last. The story

steers well clear of stepping on the big, metal toes of any possible future movie by being set on Cybertron during one of its civil wars. This wouldn't work as a live-action Hollywood movie – it'd be impossible to work in any lingering shots of Megan Fox bending over, for a start – but it works fine for an action game.

What kind of action game isn't quite clear yet, but we're certainly expecting a departure from the style of the two movie games. The debut trailer almost suggests a *Dynasty Warriors: Gundam*-type of deal, which is an interesting prospect, but, y'know, it just might work.

High Moon Studios is developing **Transformers: War For Cybertron**. Check the website for more details: www.highmoonstudios.com

WHAT MAKES THIS
GAME GREAT?

- It has these robots in it that can turn into cars and planes and stuff.
- Technically, it's not a lazy movie tie-in.
- We hear Cybertron is a nice place to visit at this time of year.
- A bit of back story for those that like that sort of thing.

READ ME

With two successful *Transformers* movie tie-ins under its belt, Activision has announced a third title, this one with its own story.



● A creature apparently made from some kind of digital, magic poo. Whatever it is, it's tough.



● *Nier* is 'grittier' than most other JRPGs. As proved by its swearing.



Ha! These foes are hardly worthy of our steel!
Grimoire Weiss

● This is one of *Nier*'s Dark Hand powers. Looks like *Bayonetta*'s hair, doesn't it?



IT'S JUST A SCRATCH

Having a *Nier* death experience **NIER SEEMS TO** have taken a leaf out of *God Of War*'s book by featuring boss battles that aren't confined to restricted arenas and repeated attack patterns. The battle against this monstrous behemoth takes place across an entire town and goes on for a long time. At one point we saw *Nier* use a Dark Hand KO on it, which ripped its arm clean off, only for it to sprout a new one almost immediately. To be honest, we were about ready for the battle to be over by that point.

RELEASE DATE: 23 APRIL

Nier Gestalt

It's too dark for Shades

Last time we previewed *Nier*, we tried to clear up some confusion, but it turns out that while we were mostly right, the whole truth was even more confusing than we thought and that we were confused, too.

You might remember we called it *Nier Replicant*, but that this time we've called it *Nier Gestalt*. Didn't we say before that *Gestalt* was the 360 version and *Replicant* was the PS3 version? Yes we did, and that is indeed the case, in Japan. Here in Europe, there will be just one version of the game, *Nier Gestalt*, but as we understand it, we're not missing much. We don't know much about how there came to be two versions in Japan, but it has a whiff of Sony and Square Enix getting into a bit of 'you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours' to help each other out in what is a difficult domestic market even for two such huge companies.

So anyway, now that we understand what's going on, what's *Nier* actually like? Well, our demo had only been running for about 30

seconds before someone dropped an F-bomb. By which we mean a character in a Japanese-made RPG – usually such polite, demur types – said the F-word. And there was more foul language later. It sounded a bit clumsy, as it often does even in swear games developed in the West, but it was interesting in that it seemed to be an indication that Cavia and Square Enix are going for the 'gritty' tone which, to them, must seem to be a way to appeal to a Western market.

Maybe it is, but making a good game also helps, and *Nier* doesn't really look like a classic in the making at the moment. It looks like a pretty standard, old-fashioned, repetitive action-RPG to us, but there is one glimmer of hope. There are an enormous variety of special skills to choose from so maybe there's more tactical depth to the combat and character development than we've seen so far.

Nier Gestalt is being developed by Cavia. Check the website for more details: www.cavia.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- There are loads of different magic spells and skills.
- Lots of tear-jerking scenes that JRPG fans love.
- There's a 'lady' who wears lingerie into battle in it.
- Hundreds of side quests to grind through.

READ ME

Nier Gestalt is the first-ever Square Enix-published game to feature the F-word. It felt clumsy to us but that's what they call gritty.



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POWERED BY



Requirements: Apple iPhone 3G, 3GS, iPod Touch or iPad >> iPhone 3.1.2 or higher >> An internet connection

REVIEWS

Playing bad games so you don't have to



Dan Howdle

Reviewed: *Final Fantasy XIII*

This space should be about what people do outside of work, and therefore isn't meant to be about games or writing. But games and writing are pretty much all Dan does. He's been writing about something other than games recently, though – sci-fi stories. He won't tell us exactly what they're about, but from the clues he's given, one of them sounds exactly like *Wallace & Gromit's A Grand Day Out*.

currently playing: *Heavy Rain*

on review



64 *Final Fantasy XIII* PS3

Unlucky for some



68 *Just Cause 2* PS3

Sunset strip



70 *Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition* PS3

One more time

the rest

- 66 *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* PS3
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- 79 *Army Of Two: The 40th Day* PSP
- 79 *Puzzle Chronicles* PSP
- 80 *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories* PSP





Gavin Mackenzie

Reviewed: *Just Cause 2*, *Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days*, *Way Of The Samurai 3*

Gav recently acquired two new nicknames, with each vying to become permanent. The first is Mr Douche and the second Uncle Gav. Uncle Gav comes from the fact that he recently became a proud uncle for the first

time. Mr Douche was given him by an internet commenter regarding his review of *MAG*. Which is best? Answers to the usual address.

currently playing: *Peggle*



Ian Dransfield

Reviewed: *God Of War III*, *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*, *Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition*, *BlazBlue*, *White Knight Chronicles*, *Star Ocean: The Last Hope International*, *SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3*, *Superstars V8: Next Challenge*, *Army Of Two: The 40th Day*, *Puzzle Chronicles*

Normally we'd talk about what Ian's done this month but he hasn't done anything as he's been too busy reviewing games. See above.

currently playing: *Dante's Inferno*



Darran Jones

Reviewed: *Final Fantasy VIII*

To support his addictions to Dreamcast games and Magic: The Gathering cards, Darran's had to cut costs in other areas of his life. He's started shopping at a cheap German supermarket, buying nothing but tinned curry and frozen Yorkshire puddings.

Next month he's going to try an even cheaper German supermarket and see how its tinned curry and Yorkshire puds compare.

currently playing: *Vancouver 2010*

RELEASE DATE: 19 MARCH

God Of War III

Vengeance, it seems, is a well-worn path



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer
Santa Monica Studio
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action Adventure
Supports
720p, Downloadable content, DualShock 3
Age Rating
18
Website
www.godofwar.com

How to open a review of one of the most eagerly anticipated games in the PlayStation 3's lifetime? We won't bore you with drawn-out analogies, rough ideas or teasing notions – chances are you've looked at the score and hopefully your interest in what we have to say has been piqued: *God Of War III* is a bit of a letdown. It's grandiose, spectacular in parts and suitably epic for the most part, but it is brought crashing from the heavens down to normal old earth by a plethora of niggling irritations and poor design choices.

But let's not start with the bad, eh? We don't want this to be all downer, after all. The introduction sequence is one of the best in the game – might we even say one of the best in any game. Definitely one of the most epic. From the seemingly 007-inspired opening credits to the triumphant climb towards Zeus's palace, the beginning of the game does nothing but get the player pumped for what is about to come. Needless to say, it goes a bit FUBAR and Kratos ends up swimming the River Styx, having to start his climb for revenge all over again. Aside from a story aspect, this acts as a way for the game to begin with all of Kratos's powers from the last game intact before stripping the player of the extended health

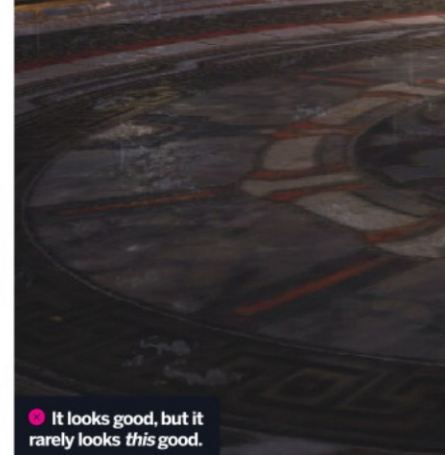
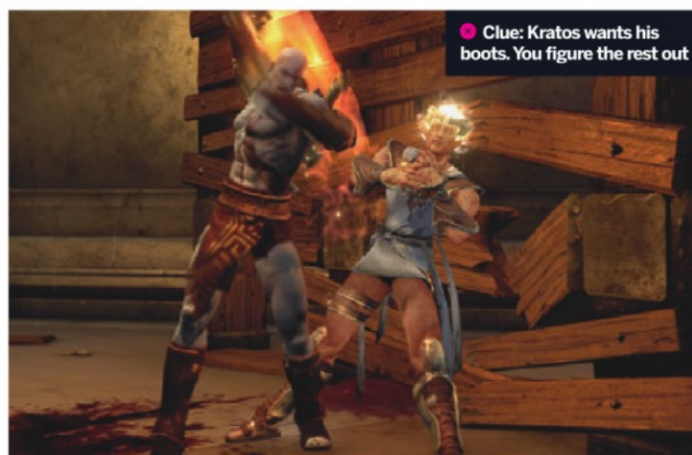
and suchlike – fortunately it doesn't feel too cheap, and in fact (thanks to the story element) makes a fair bit of sense. Though it doesn't answer why a man who can kill a god can't get through a bramble thicket without help.

It's a bit of a split decision on voice acting, mind you. A lot of it is good – Rip Torn's vocal talents (we think it's him, at least) for Hephaestus are pretty darn good indeed, but even Kratos – at times – sounds a bit laboured and forced. Having

It's grandiose, spectacular in parts and suitably epic for the most part

said that, we believe Simon Templeman, the voice of Kain, is involved, so that's an automatic +2% to the score.

It's hard not to mention the violence of the game, which is a real draw for many interested in the series. It's safe to say that Santa Monica Studio really hasn't skimped: from seeing Kratos murder someone from the perspective of the murderee through to the fun, family-friendly way in which Kratos relieves Hermes of his shoes – there is no skimping on the red stuff. It's gloriously over-the-top and raises more chuckles than it does horrifying gasps, though at the same time it is absolutely not one to be played in front of the kids. >



> Combat is everything it was in the past, with very few alterations. Weapon switching can still be made on the fly, and the new armaments for Kratos fit the bill well enough, even if they don't really mix things up a great deal. It does mean that there isn't much of an adjustment period on picking up a new weapon, though, and the same goes for the items that are collected along the way. From Helios's head, which can be used to find secret doorways, through to the boots of Hermes, they all open up new areas for exploration and have a hand in dragging the story along, so it's pretty difficult to have any issue with that. There's nothing really game-changing, though, so those looking for a new experience or those who weren't fans of previous *God Of War* titles aren't really going to be that impressed. Even taking into account the myriad influences piled on top of the successful formula – the likes *Shadow Of The Colossus* and a few others are plundered for ideas – it remains firmly in comfortable territory.

Traversing the body of a Titan is quite easily the best section of the game – and we don't even mean Gaia, whom you are 'aboard' at the game's opening. Climbing

across fingers, arms, chests and heads while tearing out fingernails and battling boils may sound daft on paper, but in practice it's

phenomenal and it's a shame there aren't more sequences in the game like this.

Problems start to show themselves, though. An increasingly infuriating selection of enemies will crop up as the game progresses, offering the player a combination of unblockable, undodgeable attacks to put up with. This fun little gang is made all the more annoying by the fact that they either have a tendency to block your most powerful attacks, spam ridiculous moves or simply stay in the air/invisible/underground, away from your attacks. There are ways to counter this, but there is never a sense of accomplishment when you defeat the irritating little buggers. You just feel a sense of relief that you don't have to face any more of them for a while. This isn't the feeling a game so heavily based on combat should elicit from a player – they should be begging for every single fight, they should want to best every enemy and

Traversing the body of a Titan is easily the best section of the game – it's a shame there aren't more like this

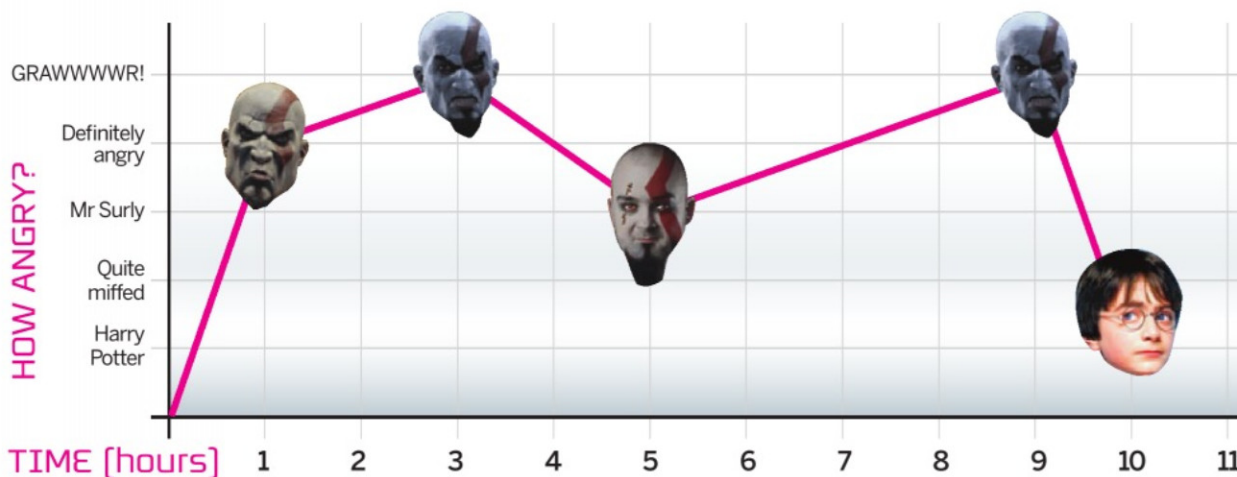
want to hone their tactics to take out the next batch of foes.

Intensely frustrating sections won't endear the game to you as much as the epic boss battles will, and it's in these areas that the game shows why it falls just short of true greatness. Daedalus's labyrinth, for example, holds some of the more exasperating sections and features some absurdly cheap insta-death contraptions, which simply should not be included in any game, never mind one which is supposed to be so thoroughly fantastic. And this is without even mentioning an escort section that we failed because we managed to save our charge from death. A decent save system goes some way to ease the pain but just be sure to have a cushion to hand into which you can bellow some of the more offensive expletives. Maybe this labyrinth was intended to be as trying as it is, to get across to the player how hellish a device it was supposed to be. But that doesn't excuse other sections for falling into the same traps, and it doesn't excuse lazy mechanics and a lack of signposting (or, patronisingly thorough signposting).

The comparisons with recent action games like *Bayonetta* will continue to pop up, but that's with good reason. *Bayonetta* took the existing 'hammer the buttons until everything is dead' genre that was popularised by the likes of *Devil May Cry* and, to some extent, the earlier *God Of War* games and did something fresh with it. A layer of tactical play was added and controls were refined to their absolute pinnacle. *God Of War III*, on the other hand, sticks faithfully to an old schematic, and as a result it's starting to look a little bit tired. It was once – and when looked at in the context of the *God Of War* Collection, still is – an

RAGE-O-METER

Your handy guide to how angry Kratos is throughout *God Of War III*





CHALLENGE ANNEKARATOS

Finished the game? Bored? Play these!



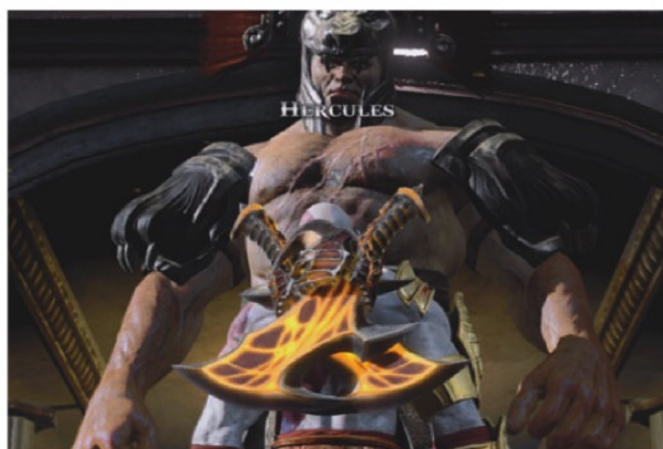
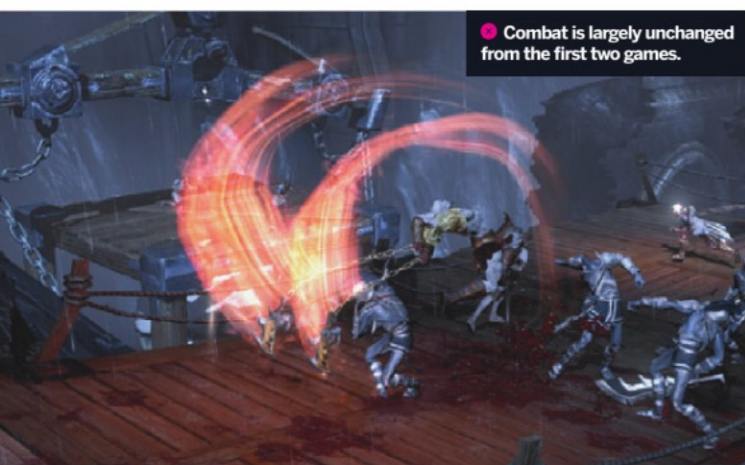
ON COMPLETING THE game, you can replay with access to the items you should have picked up through your first blast. Infinite health, magic and everything else is yours to have, should you so want it. More interestingly, Challenge mode unlocks in the 'Treasures' section of the menu, presenting players with seven different challenges – all involving beating things up and whirling your blades over your head like Airwolf. Of these, Population Control is easily the best of the bunch, asking players to keep the number of enemies on screen to less than 50. Simply Smashing, on the other hand, is simply a little broken. In the bad way.



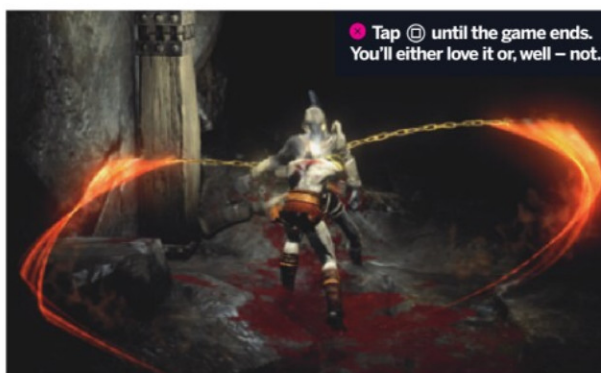
● The gods of Olympus are very much like a superhero group.



● Combat is largely unchanged from the first two games.



● Tap until the game ends. You'll either love it or, well – not.



● Flashbacks are handled with quite some style, though are at odds with the presentation of the rest of the game.

impressive system, but we hoped things would have taken a step-up in the leap from PS2 to PS3.

The cardinal sin, though, is that by the end of the game you can't help but feel Kratos has been sullied, if only just a small amount, as a character. He *is* the game, so to make him even slightly less badass is to ruin just about everything. However, he has not been ruined, mind – it's not like he embraces good and becomes the God Of Ponies, or anything.

There's no doubt that *God Of War III* is a great game. How much you like it will be up to personal preference, though. If you want more of the same, looking a bit better and can put up with some suspect design decisions, frustrating mechanics and

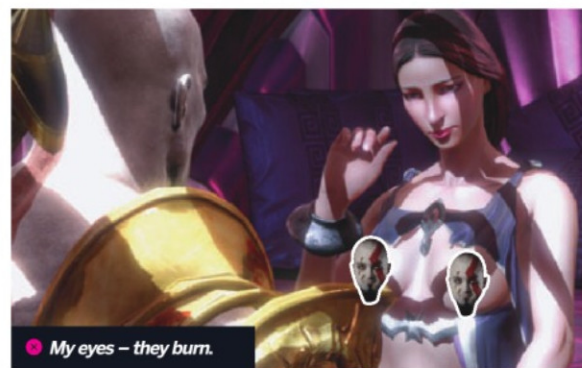
graphics that aren't *always* as impressive as you'd hope, then you'll adore it. It should be taken into account that the negative tone of this review is purely borne out of our need to explain why not all of our expectations weren't lived up to. Don't let it temper things, though: *God Of War III* is a fantastic game, well worth playing. We just expected a bit more than it ended up giving us.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

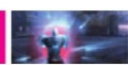
Suitably epic and still fun to play, Kratos's last outing isn't necessarily his finest. Hindered by some tired mechanics it's not as much of a step forward as we wanted.

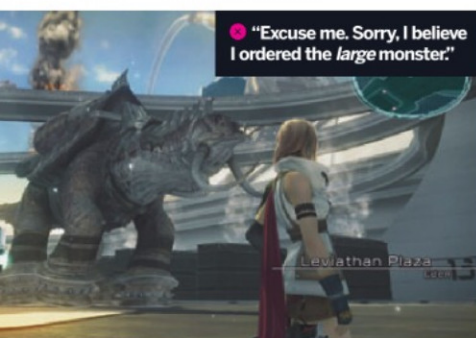
88%



● My eyes – they burn.

● The labyrinth is the most annoying section of the game.





DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
In-house
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action adventure
Supports:
720p, 1080i, 1080p,
DualShock 3, Dolby
Digital 5.1
Age Rating
16
Website
www.
finalfantasy13game.
com

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Final Fantasy XIII

One for the fans...

It takes a very long time to finish *Final Fantasy XIII*; we know, we did it, and now we're bragging, but you have to give us that. During that fortnight we've found ourselves at the mercy of a barrage of questions from series fanatics. They always get to us somehow. Twitter, Facebook, telephone. Anything short of actually rocking up at our front door and demanding to know how it's going, in fact, would appear to be fair game. We can safely say that nothing else has caused this much anxiety among its potential audience. Not that we can remember anyway. And that's hardly surprising. Reviews of the



Japanese-language version of *Final Fantasy XIII* have fluctuated wildly, and despite the same criticisms appearing time and time again – corridor gameplay in the main – how much it matters to the reviewer in question has ultimately decided its awarded score.

But is this really anything new? Every *Final Fantasy* game we can ever remember has divided its audience. Just ask another fan and finding any kind of unanimity as to which outings moved mountains and which largely sucked balls is a constant source of disagreement. *Final Fantasy*'s disparate battle systems, worlds, characters and overriding tone from one game to the next all but guarantee a constant churn of fan appreciation – or lack of it. It's a signature of the series.

If you can forgive us this preamble in place of sedimentary plot detail, we'll let you in on a little secret; that we – reviewers – are almost as prone to the subjective way of looking at things as you are. Ultimately, the very purpose of a review is to define a game in enough

As usual the summon animations are a superb visual highlight.

detail for you to decide whether or not you might like it. We can't tell you that you're going to like *Final Fantasy XIII*, we can only tell you that we did.

It's a given that this is one of the most beautiful pieces of eye candy on PS3. The *Final Fantasy* series has always been beautiful and its first gambit – in-joke, whoo! – on current-generation technology was going to have to be pretty astounding to raise

This game is perhaps the best looking we've ever seen, making it especially difficult to criticise

our creeky old brow. So we say this with no small amount of wincing at our own words; this game is perhaps the best looking we have ever seen, making it especially difficult to criticise without becoming swept away in the visual majesty of it all. Cuts to and from between in-engine and CG – which is absolutely breathtaking – take a while to register, and gone are the days when the difference was in any way jarring. Hyperbole mode disengaged.

As usual, the game's cast is made up largely of stereotypes, each with a simple purpose. The moody Lightning gives us cause to want to see her happier, the dumb, big-hearted Snow hides behind a confident façade – but he's really crying on the inside, ladies – and Hope, the mandatory kid who knows nothing at all so that everything must be explained to him – you – in detail.

WALK THE LINE

Do corridors really matter?

FINAL FANTASY XIII caused us to rethink our views on exploration. Exploration is an illusion. The vast majority of games offer us a restricted freedom to find a treasure chest, side quest or to

generally waste time. When it really comes down to it, however, when such asides are taken away, as they are for the vast majority of *Final Fantasy XIII*, it's really not too long before we stop missing it.

Do we really need those blind alleys to explore? Probably not. The game offers you the choice later on with its monster hunts, too, just in case you're not seeing the bright side.





Check that mini-map. That about sums up the first 15 hours.



This is in-engine. It's truly hard to tell sometimes.



This is Hope. He whines a lot. And cries. Like a girl.



Ultimately, if you break them down to their key functions, they are all necessary. They are also superbly designed. Tetsuya Nomura is truly flexing his artistic might, not only with some outstanding aesthetic design, but also a tale unique to each, which all but guarantees that you'll care about what eventually becomes of them.

While watching cut-scenes is never anything less than enjoyable – barring a number of notable exceptions where Hope won't stop whining, or Snow is being especially dumb – it's battling that will be occupying by far the greater part of your time with *Final Fantasy XIII*. This is where the game truly excels. Each character may learn a specific set of roles. Initially three are available and pre-defined for each character. The roles themselves range from melee (Commando), magic user (Ravager), and healer (Medic). There are also roles which buff your party

(Synergist), de-buff the enemy (Saboteur) and tank (Sentinel).

The game's paradigm will see you switching in real-time between different combinations. Each combination has a specific name. For example, Saboteur-Synergist-Medic is called 'Tide Turner' since your party will be buffing up and sabotaging the stats of the enemy while kept alive by the healer. Once these modifiers are in place, you can then switch back to a paradigm with more offensive zing. Paradigm switching is not something which you have to occasionally consider. It is a constant concern and will often see you changing your paradigm every few seconds.

Arriving back where we started, the issue which we've been badgered about the most is linearity. Reports of a single corridor through which to explore the world are widespread, but the question of whether this is true or not is perhaps less important than the one

which asks exactly how much it affects fan's enjoyment. The answer – our perspective – is not very much. The first 15 or so hours are largely tutorial-based. The game's battle system is complex and finely nuanced and until you've learned it, corridors are pretty much all you are going to get. And, while the game opens out later on, with monster hunts and open hubs to explore, only those who adore the series and indeed the genre will enjoy it enough to get there.

Dan Howdle

VERDICT

The question remains; will you like it? JRPG-haters – will hate it. *Final Fantasy* fans will be split just as they have been with every one of its predecessors. For our part, despite its flaws, we think it gets the job done.

85%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Battlefield: Bad Company 2

War: never been so much fun



DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
EA Digital Illusions CE
Price
£49.99
Players
1-24
Genre
First-person shooter
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3
Age Rating
16
Website
www.badcompany2.ea.com

The original *Bad Company* was a good game – not great, but good. Single-player established a bunch of wisecracking fools as the titular B Company and took players through a rather forgettable campaign. Multiplayer, however, was great – though hamstrung by its lack of modes. It seems, then, that DICE has learned from its mistakes and turned *Bad Company 2* from a single-player-focused title with multiplayer tagged on to the exact opposite.

That's not to say the one-player campaign is entirely forgettable. It sees the boys on the trail of some naughty Russians who have their hands on a superweapon, which may or may not have the ability to bring down society as we know it. While a fair bit has been made of the more serious tone in the game, *BC2* hasn't forgotten its sense of humour, and the dialogue between two characters on their favourite moment in *Predator* raised a fairly big smile at this end ("that's not a scene – *that's the movie!*"). But all of this is just window dressing on what is a straightforward, fairly bland campaign that takes the chaps around the world – though mostly through South America.

The main problem is that the player feels shockingly funnelled through the game and its set pieces, and the instances of on-rails, mounted gun/vehicle sequences are just too many to bother putting up with. It's hard to play through the campaign without constantly having the nagging feeling that this is a game made by a multiplayer developer, and would be far more suited to being multiplayer only. Glitches, an unbalanced difficulty level that sees you cruising through before hitting a complete brick wall, noticeably poor checkpoint placement and a general feeling that it's just a bit half-baked all serve to drag the experience down.

If this review were just taking into account the single-player portion of *BC2* then it would score far lower – around the 75% mark, to put a number on it. Bear that in mind if you don't have access to the internet (you Luddite, you).

But we're breaking with tradition here and incorporating multiplayer into the standard review – it would, as in the case of *Modern Warfare 2*, be unfair not to. And this is where *BC2* really excels, allowing DICE to bring to the

fore its unquestionable ability as a multiplayer developer. Without multiplayer, *BC2* would only be a decent game: with it, it's fantastic.

Whereas last time around there was only one mode out of the box, Gold Rush (two when Conquest arrived via DLC), this time we have no less than four and the potential for more to be added, again via DLC. It was this lack of variety first time around that made us mark the game down and question its ability to tackle the might of *Modern Warfare*. This time, though, it's a genuine challenger.

It's stone-cold proof that you don't need massive numbers for a good experience

DICE would be the first to admit it stutters a little on the single-player side of things, but that would be missing the point. Online is its bitch, to put it lightly, and playing *Bad Company 2* with 23 other like-minded warmongers is something incredibly special. It isn't just that the game feels so very right, that it's tight, balanced and simple enough to get into – it's that there's an

MODERN WHATFARE?

Imitation, flattery and all that guff

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO talk about *Bad Company 2* without bringing up *Modern Warfare 2* – it is the yardstick by which most FPS titles these days are measured.

So it comes as a minor joy that *Bad Company 2* is all too willing to bring up *Modern Warfare 2* in the game itself. For example, one character, speaking of the potential for special forces soldiers to end up on the scene, says they'll probably have "pussy ass heartbeat monitors on their guns". There are less

clever parts, like how controlling a UAV in black-o-white cam turns up, but all in all it's good to see DICE doesn't shy away from the competition.



That, right there, is the reason *BC2* makes us smile so much.





● Check the map – this level is shockingly open. Though it has nothing in it.



● This section is surprisingly intense, but also one of the mentioned difficulty spikes.



● Oh, if only we had an explosive with which to devastate this shack.



● The on-rails vehicle sections are quite numerous and fairly dull.



● Three of the BC four, handling a superweapon no less.



extra layer of tactics, technique and skill to proceedings that simply isn't done in other online shooters, including *Modern Warfare 2*, *MAG* et al. Destruction adds such depth of strategy that it's hard to go back to other games afterwards. Taking out a sniper by levelling the building he's in is something that should be in every FPS from now until forever, and the ability to take out campers by blowing up the world around them is so utterly, utterly satisfying it's bordering on unbelievable. It's also stone-cold proof that you don't need massive numbers for a good experience, as cleverly designed maps with less players will always win out over *BIGGER, FASTER, MORE MORE*.

Modes come in four different flavours: Rush, which sees attackers and defenders doing their respective duties in order to destroy or protect M-com stations; Conquest, which is the classic *Battlefield* base-capturing mode; Squad Rush, a new addition that sees Rush taking place on a much smaller scale of two teams against

one another; and Squad Deathmatch, which sees four teams of four going head-to-head against each other to be first to 50 points. All of these excellent modes can be played in a 'hardcore' setting, which removes the HUD, makes weapons more lethal and a few other bits and bobs.

Admittedly we haven't been able to play online 'in the wild', but our extended test sessions have shown us that *Bad Company 2* is incredibly well-made, very well-balanced and altogether one of the best online shooters on PS3.

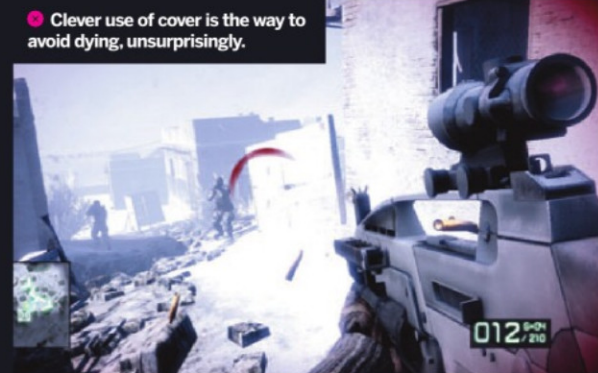
Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

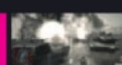
If you're not in this for the multiplayer, knock 15-20% off the score – just the same as with *Modern Warfare 2*, really. Alone it's alright, online it's bordering on genius. *Bad Company 2* is quite possibly the best online shooter on PS3 today.

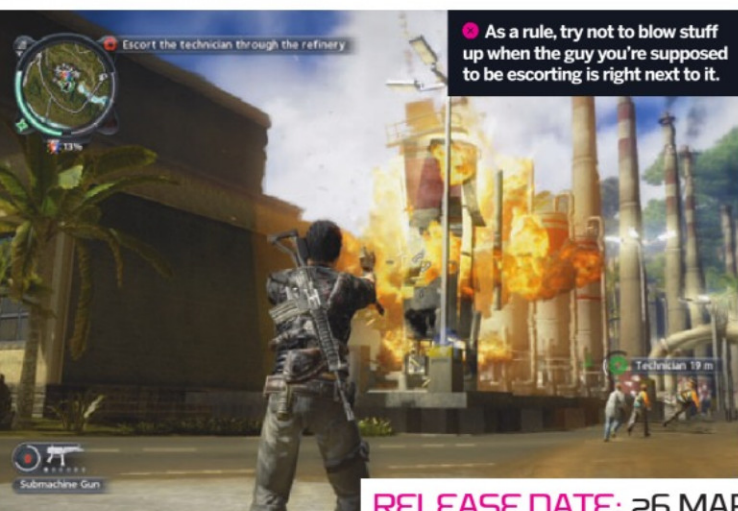
93%

● Clever use of cover is the way to avoid dying, unsurprisingly.



● Rescue one bloke, kill the other. There's your story.





As a rule, try not to blow stuff up when the guy you're supposed to be escorting is right next to it.

RELEASE DATE: 26 MARCH



There isn't even a detonator in his hand – he just clicks his fingers.



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
Avalanche Studios
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Sandbox
Supports
720p, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
15
Website
www.justcause.com

Just Cause 2

Two thousand acres of sky diving

When we first got our hands on a playable build of *Just Cause 2*, we thought that maybe, just maybe, it could be "the first game to truly bridge the gap between action movie and action game" and we were right. It *could* have been. But it isn't. Not quite. But it does get commendably close, closer than any game before it, to spanning that gap by delivering seamless, fast-paced, blockbuster action without taking control out of your hands. We love what it aims to do and we love that it mostly succeeds at it. But it does, unfortunately, trip itself up just a few too many times to be an absolute must-have. Honestly, though, it is just a gnat's pube away from classic status.

Just Cause 2 is a game that is somehow capable of feeling totally familiar, derivative even, while at the same time offering experiences that will truly have never been had before in a game. Almost certainly not

in real life either, for that matter. A lot of it is almost exactly the same as *Mercenaries 2*, albeit more polished, but then you can also sometimes very suddenly find yourself in 'I didn't even think games could do this' territory. Weirdly, there isn't an awful lot in-between, and that might be one of the reasons it falls just short of greatness. It often feels like the generic, conventional stuff is holding the unique groundbreaking ideas back a little. That said, we can still see why Avalanche Studios made it this way. If it weren't grounded in the familiar, *Just Cause 2* would be in danger of alienating its audience. And even as it is, the first few difficulty hurdles might prove too much for some.

The initial learning curve in *Just Cause 2* is pretty steep. Despite what first impressions might lead you to believe, it plays very differently to a typical third-person sandbox

shooter. The parachute, the stunt moves and, most importantly, the grapple hook are fundamentally important to enjoying this game at anywhere near its fullest potential, but they're not that intuitive to use. For the first few hours will likely be spent getting it wrong, and this can get rather frustrating. So frustrating, in fact, that some people might be inclined to give up on the fancy stuff and play *Just Cause 2* like a regular shooter, which would be a real shame as a few hours of patience and persistence will be richly rewarded with dozens of hours of sometimes breathtaking entertainment.

Once you've got used to the game's controls, the possibilities on offer really start to open up, and the urge to showboat your way spectacularly through every situation becomes irresistible. One such situation requires you to assassinate a pilot in a hangar at an airport

A fairly typical-sounding scenario, which, in your average game, would normally involve proceeding into the airport shooting enemies and/or following a scripted series of set pieces. But *Just Cause 2* really does give you the tools to create your own set pieces on the fly, so here's what we did...

Stole a display model sports car then leaped it over the airfield fence then drove it at speed into the pilot and his bodyguards then jumped out and grapple zipped across the hangar to avoid the chain of explosions triggered by the damaged car then tied the one remaining guard to the tail of a chopper then flew the chopper out of the hangar then got shot down but escaped and opened our 'chute and grappled to the enemy chopper

Patience and persistence will be richly rewarded with some breathtakingly raucous entertainment

that shot us down and shot the passenger then dragged the pilot out then flew to a mountaintop and jumped out then opened the 'chute and drifted down the mountainside enjoying the view while the helicopter crash-landed in a ball of flames behind us.

We tried that with proper sentence structure and punctuation and stuff, but it wouldn't fit. The point is, an awful lot happened in just a five to ten minute spell of play, and it happened fluidly, seamlessly and without resorting to cut-scenes. There was one brief quick-time event when we hijacked the enemy helicopter, but other than that it was all gameplay. Once you've got the hang of it, *Just Cause 2* is nearly always like that. But only nearly always.

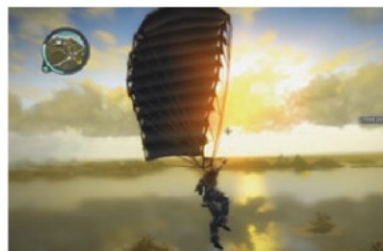
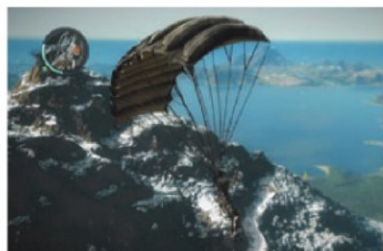
The biggest problem we had with *Just Cause 2* was that the controls are sometimes

A COUP WITH A VIEW

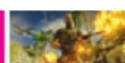
Best game scenery ever? Why yes

SOME MIGHT ARGUE that Panau is rather too big and too spread out, with too much travelling between locations being required. But when your mode of transport is a parachute that affords you stunning views like these, we see no cause for complaint. Maybe we're just getting old, but we enjoyed the quiet spells where

we were just drifting along admiring the view, and reckon the contrast between these peaceful stretches and the chaotic, violent action sequences is one of *Just Cause 2*'s biggest strengths. You don't get any points for grappling up one side of a mountain, then jumping off the other, but who needs 'em? It is its own reward.



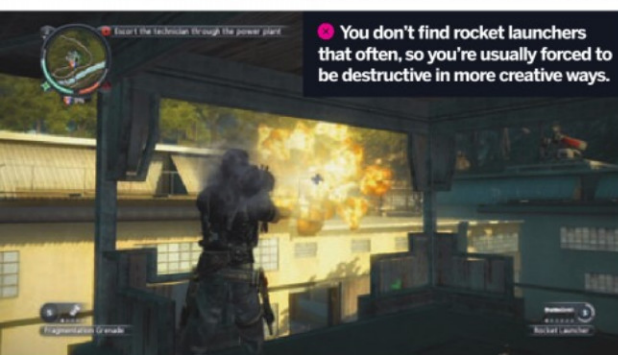
Or you could try



Mercenaries 2: World In Flames Issue 171
Very similar to *Just Cause 2* in a lot of ways, but *Just Cause 2* is much, much better. 78%



All mounted guns can be detached, but you can't run, jump or grapple while holding one.



You don't find rocket launchers that often, so you're usually forced to be destructive in more creative ways.

This is the classic 'tie an enemy to a canister then shoot the canister' move in action.



We missed our target with the grapple here and ended up behind our enemies, so we shot them. All's well that ends well.

inexplicably inaccurate and inconsistent. Like you'll sometimes find that, for no apparent reason, you can't shoot the passenger of a car when you're standing on the roof of it, or you can't shoot your grapple hook over, as opposed to *into*, a waist-high barrier without jumping up first.

For the most part, though, *Just Cause 2* is a major improvement over the original game in the series and will provide hours upon hours of raucous entertainment for anyone who's willing to persist, improvise and experiment to the full extent of its possibilities. And you might need to bring just a little bit of forgiveness with you, too.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

Delivers on the ambitious intentions of the original with added interest, only slightly letting itself down with some control issues that could and should have been fixed. Still the closest you're going to get to a truly playable action movie for now, though.

87%



Races are fun, but seem oddly out of place.

Stunt driver points: 4 points

Checkpoints

Time

00:10:00

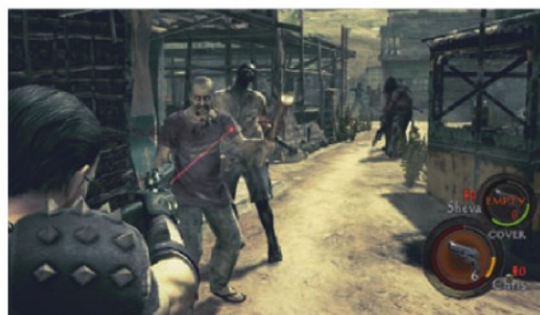
Best time

00:00:00

In this series



Just Cause Issue 145
Pushed the PS2 to its limit, leaving very little room for a sense of purpose. Impressive nonetheless. **82%**



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition

Hope this is not... CHRIS'S... blood



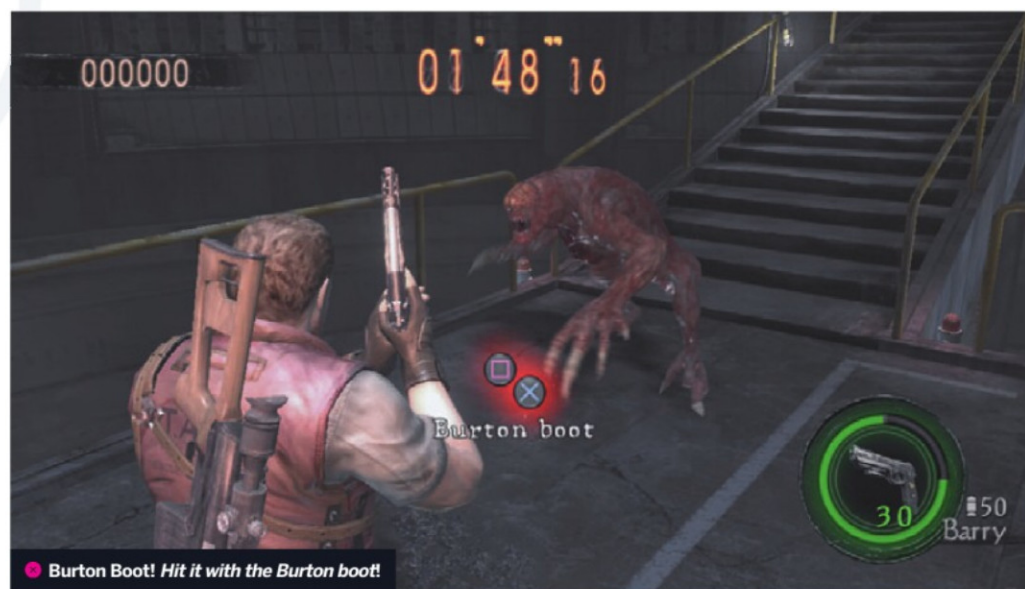
DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
In-house
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Action Adventure
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Motion Controller (when released)
Age Rating
18
Website
www.residentevil.com

Take *Resident Evil 5*, sprinkle with a few extra bits of content and liberally dose with Barry Burton. There we have *RE5: Gold Edition* in all its glory.

Unsurprisingly the game plays the same as it did first time around, which is sure to disappoint those who wanted to see things mixed up so the control scheme didn't feel so out of place. Still, it does a job and the ride is just as exciting as before. The additional content sees a couple of 'behind the scenes' stories told, first covering Jill and Chris's investigation into the Spencer Estate and second Jill and Josh's escape from the Tricell facility, both as seen previously in cut-scenes from the original release. These two bits of DLC clock in at around the one-hour mark each, meaning they're fun distractions that can be blasted through in one sitting – in fact, they have to be, as there's no way of saving progress. Mercenaries mode makes a re-return, this time with the addition of *Resident Evil's* greatest character: Barry Burton. Again, it's another fun, but brief distraction – and the same can be said for the online Versus mode.

But we have to ask the question: why bother putting in a single-player mode if you



can't be bothered making the AI competent? And why release an updated version if you're not going to fix anything about problems that were obvious first time around? This isn't some minor complaint about 'they picked up my bullets' – this is a major, near game-breaking fault. When the mission is reliant on your partner surviving, making them incapable of looking after themselves is a cardinal sin. Boss battles become babysitting chores, large-scale encounters become overwhelmed with panic as you realise your partner is probably going to get cornered and there's nothing they'll do to help themselves. This is soon replaced by rage when they inevitably get killed, again, sending you back



to the last checkpoint. We don't want the AI to take over and run through the entire game for us, but it needs to be made to a useable standard, otherwise there's no point.

Played with other people, just as with *Resi 5* the first time around, *Gold Edition* is a very good game and great fun. Alone, it's a chore.

Ian Dransfield

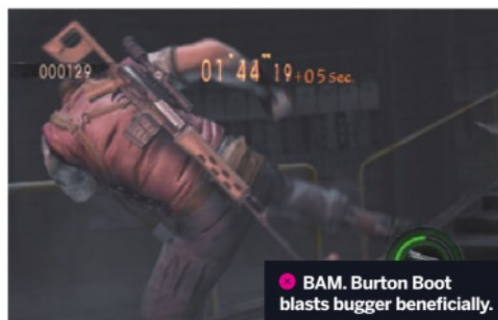
VERDICT

Resi 5 owners should just pick up the DLC. The rest of you have a better reason to pick up the game now, with downloads included, even if it still has the same single-player faults as before.

86%



It's not the original mansion, but a cunning remake of the first. And very pretty, too.



RELEASE DATE: 19 MARCH

MotoGP 09/10

Two wheels are better than one...
maybe not as good as four



DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
Monumental Games
Price
£39.99
Players
1-20
Genre
Racing
Supports
720p, PlayStation
Network,
Downloadable content,
DualShock 3, Dolby
Digital 5.1
Age Rating
3
Website
www.playmotogp.com

In real life, motorbikes are way more exciting than cars because you're really riding by the seat of your pants and, with one false move, could be killed or horribly maimed in a matter of seconds. That's a buzz. Cars are just cars. We all go in cars all the time. Even the really sexy ones aren't that much different on the inside.

For some reason this doesn't transfer from real life into games, though. Car games are exciting. *Gran Turismo*, *Burnout*, *GRID*, *DiRT*... yeah! Wow! Phwoar! Cor blimey guv'nor! You don't have to be into motorsports to love them. *Tourist Trophy*, *SBK*, *MX Vs ATV*, *MotoGP*... hmmm... games for hardcore, two-wheeled petrolheads, aren't they?

Is this because there's something inherently unappealing about bike games? We don't think so. Seat of your pants and all that, remember. Maybe it's just that bike games tend not to be that good. This one, *MotoGP 09/10* is a good one – one of the best we reckon – but it's still not *that* good.

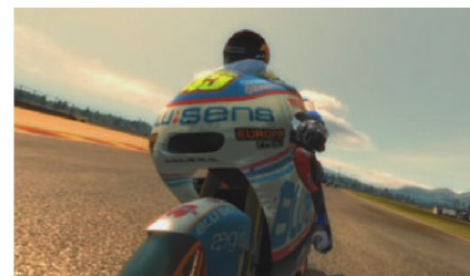
It's fun, satisfying, rewarding and just about challenging enough, but the adrenaline-pumping pants/seat interface just isn't there. It never makes you think,

The adrenaline-pumping pants/
seat interface just isn't there

"I shouldn't be going this fast, I might die. But I can't help it... just a little... bit... more... speed," and we sort of thought that was what riding fast bikes was supposed to be about. Even crashes don't really induce more than a 'Whoops!' or an 'Uh-oh!' when what you really want is an 'Ooooooooooh... he's not getting up in a hurry after that!'

Still, despite this somewhat tame feel, *MotoGP 09/10* is a decent racing game with a good, steady learning curve, a reasonably compelling Career mode and all the officially licensed bits and bobs you could ask for, assuming you're not the excessively demanding type. For example, rider likenesses haven't been licensed. If you want to know how accurately rendered they are under their helmets, then sorry, but you're probably a bit weird.

The Career mode is particularly well done, with the management side of it



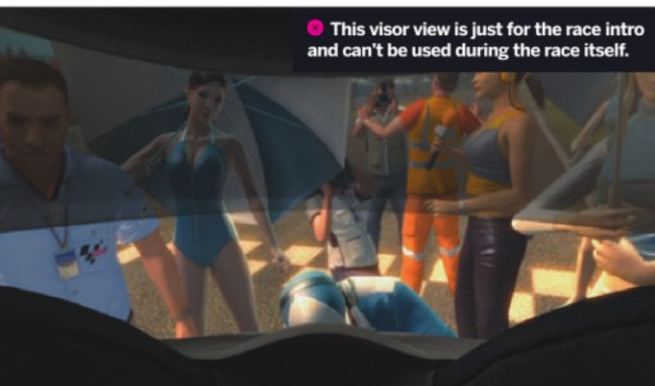
foregoing pernickety realism in favour of simple decisions, objectives and RPG-style progression. The races do start to feel a bit samey before long, but the design is smart enough to start you off with fairly low expectations and targets so that there's a tangible feeling of improvement and of driving... nay, riding... your career forward. Good enough to be essential even for non-*MotoGP* fans? Not quite. But it's still a likeable enough game in its own right.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

A well-put-together, if not very polished effort that improves upon the last *MotoGP* game. Best of its type on PS3 – we only wish that were saying more.

77%





RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing

Hedgehog á la kart

DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Sumo Digital
Price
£39.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Racing
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
7
Website
www.sega.com/
sonicracing/

Back in the PSone days, kart racing was the go-to genre for licensed titles and franchise spin-offs. They were easy to make, popular, accessible and provided a template that a range of familiar characters and references could be slotted into. So we had *Star Wars: Super Bombad Racing*, *Muppet RaceMania*, *Walt Disney World Quest: Magical Racing Tour*, *Crash Team Racing*, *Pac-Man Rally* and many more. Doesn't happen so much any more, though. These days that gap is filled by downloadable tower-defence games. So where we were once swamped with the bloody things, a game like *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* feels oddly like something of a rare treat on PS3. Not only because it's a kart racer, but also because it's got Sonic in its

name and it's good. Been a long while since we've been able to say that, too, hasn't it?

It is trickier than you might expect, though. Beginner mode is simple enough, but take the step-up to advanced and it initially feels unassailably difficult. There's a knack to it, though, and it all comes down to using drift to boost your speed. It's confusing at first because the drift button doesn't work like a handbrake, but once you figure out how it works in conjunction with the accelerator and steering it clicks quite suddenly and you can go from consistently coming fourth or fifth to consistently coming first and second. Not that consistently, though, as, this being a kart-racing game, there is a lot of rubber band AI to keep

the pack together and the weapons can sometimes be cruel. Very, very cruel.

You know the score, you're leading for most of the race, then on the final lap you get hit by three unavoidable attacks and, within seconds, end up last with no time to catch up.

It's got Sonic in its name and it's good. Been a long while...

It comes with the territory, but even by kart-racing standards, *Sonic & Sega* can feel a bit imbalanced at times. The All-Star power-ups, which are awarded at random, are particularly over the top, with most of them pretty much equating to a ticket from last to first.

So there's a lot of luck involved, good and bad, but *Sonic & Sega* does reward skill and is a lot of fun. It's perhaps a bit of a slim package for £40, although it might not seem that way to hardcore Sega-philies after little more than fan-service-for-money.

Gavin Mackenzie

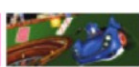
VERDICT

The best kart racer on the PS3 due to the fact it's the only one, but the good news is you won't need to overlook too many problems in order to get your karting fix.

78%



Previously...
in Play



PREVIEWED Issue 188

"What's stuck with us is that it ticks all the right boxes. Sega may have found a winning formula at last."

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger

Re-review, don't fade away, re-review don't fade away...



DETAILS

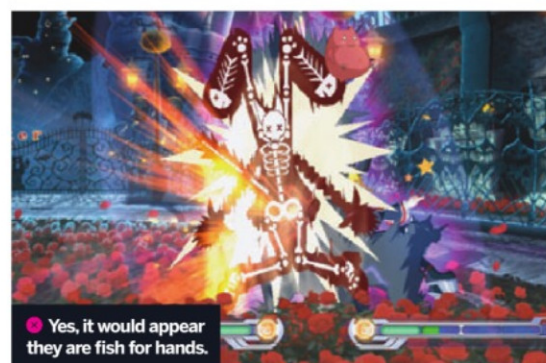
Publisher
Zen United
Developer
Arc System Works
Price
£44.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Beat-'em-up
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, DualShock 3, Arcade stick
Age Rating
12+
Website
www.blazbluegame.com

It's very difficult to follow in the wake of a Luke Albigés review when it comes to fighting games, as he is what many would call 'an expert'. Alas, we have to do our duty and so beavered away at one of the deepest, most intense, insane and pretty 2D fighters to have come to PS3 since... well... since *BlazBlue* came out in America and we reviewed it, back in **Play 183**.

As only a mere half a year (and a bit) has passed, it's unsurprising to find that our opinions on the game haven't changed very much. Sure, the initial impact the game made – especially visually – has been lost, but it's still a brawler Arc System should be proud to

It's still a brawler Arc System should be proud to take Guilty Gear's place

take *Guilty Gear*'s place. Speaking of visuals, we should point out they are still lovely, we've just grown a bit accustomed to them by now so aren't as pleasantly surprised any more – this is obviously not a fault of the game, just



due to the fact that it took *so bloody long* for the game to come out over here.

Battles are the one-on-one variety and involve all the Distortion Drives, Astral Heat finishers, counters and bursts to keep you learning for a very long time indeed. Or you can just mash the buttons, as some in the office are guilty of. *Street Fighter* purists will find much of interest in *BlazBlue*, although newcomers may be slightly overwhelmed.

There is a story mode, too, and it's every bit as inane/insane as you'd want it to be. Those who like the idea of anime-infused cut-scenes telling the story of someone referred to as Grim Reaper as he goes around tutting at people and saying 'shit' a lot will be in hog's heaven. Those who don't, won't. Essentially, story mode is nothing more than a distraction for those who can be bothered.

Those who can't be bothered, which should be most of you, can just stick with an excellent fighting game. Though it is marred for newcomers by its labyrinthine complexity and the fact that anyone with talent will tear you so many new ones you won't know which one the original is, it still comes recommended as near the top of the PS3 fighting pile.

Ian Dransfield

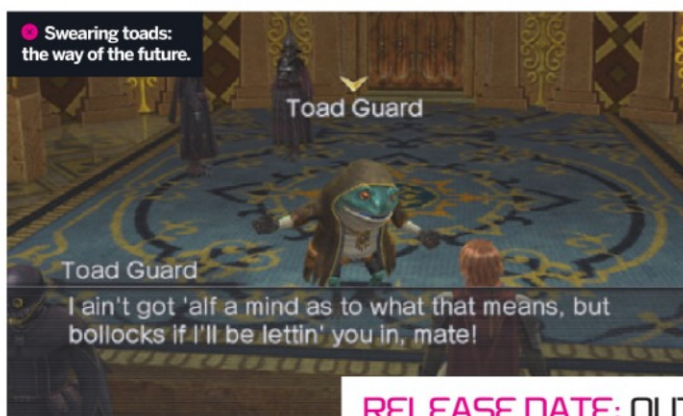
VERDICT

BlazBlue is a great-looking fighter that plays very well. It's lost some of its impact and novelty since its original release, hence the lower score, but it still comes recommended.

85%



REVIEW



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



Presentation is akin to an MMO.



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer Entertainment

Developer
Level-5

Price
£49.99

Players
1-4

Genre
RPG

Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3

Age Rating
16

Website
www.us.playstation.com/PS3/Games/White_Knight_Chronicles

White Knight Chronicles

Having trouble sleeping? Have we got a cure for you...

Have you been looking forward to a dull, asinine RPG with all the usual trappings and stereotypes we've come to know and loathe? Have you always wanted to wander around endless, aimless and pointless environments for hours at a time with no save point in sight? If you answered 'yes' to these questions, you're mentally unhinged. Oh, and you'll like *White Knight Chronicles*.

White Knight Chronicles has been in development forever but still fails to look the part

From the same developer as the masterful *Dragon Quest VIII*, the wonderful *Dark Chronicle* and the fantastic *Rogue Galaxy*, we were understandably excited when *WKC* was announced. But that was back in 2006 now, and we've moved on a bit. Whereas *Final*

Fantasy XIII still looks the part, even though it too has been in development for forever, *WKC* does not. It looks like a PS2 game in many parts, with a frame rate that doesn't hold up even in this – the most pedestrian of genres. And oh, what a genre: the JRPG. Loved and derided in equal measure, the chronicles on offer here are far likelier to fall on the latter side of things, stuck as they are in a game design hell we all hoped had been left behind.

Alas, no: aimless wandering, androgynous boy-girl heroes, a clumsy interface, controls that come across as if they haven't been tested at all (having to repeatedly press $\otimes$ to pick up multiple items? Really?) and some godawful voice acting all combine to make one of the duller experiences we've had in a while. This is no word of a lie – two people playing this game



for review have fallen asleep while doing so, on multiple occasions.

Combat is the epitome of boring, and while initial delight at combo manufacturing does manifest itself, it soon subsides and is replaced by a feeling of numbness as you realise nothing about what you're doing will make you feel any better about the fact that this is a boring waste of time.

All the same, there will be an audience for *White Knight Chronicles*. It isn't broken, for one thing. Fans of *Phantasy Star Online* and its ilk will find some old-school charm to keep them playing, and those who aren't after an updated, robust and modern game to excite them should be happy with this. We'll pass, though.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

To us this is a massive step back for one of the best RPG developers on PlayStation 2. There will always be an audience for JRPGs that do nothing of note with the genre, but it's not us. This is a boring waste.

55%



Crying toads: standard fare in a JRPG.

Or you could try



Final Fantasy XIII Issue 190
Not for everyone and with some flaws, but we enjoyed the latest iteration. **85%**

PS3



● This is a reasonably early dungeon. It's also a padded-out chore.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
tri-Ace
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Role-playing game
Supports
720p, DualShock 3
Age Rating
12
Website
www.staroceangame.com



● Use blindsides to defeat 95 per cent of enemies in the game.



Supreme Commander Gaghan.
May I request an analysis of this...object?

● Fortunately, he's talking about the thing in the space-jar.



● Combat has some interesting points but is ultimately a bit bland.

Star Ocean: The Last Hope International

Just another drop in the Ocean

Formerly thought to be a Xbox 360-exclusive, this 'International' version of *Star Ocean: The Last Hope* comes with a few minor alterations to make it worthy of the title: Japanese and English voiceovers (both awful), a less muddy look and some pointless motion blur. It's not exactly a special edition for the ages.

If you've ever played a *Star Ocean* game before then you'll know how this one plays out – characters who look like female children travel around the galaxy getting involved in nonsensical fights, being melodramatic and generally annoying the hell out of anyone unfortunate enough to be paying attention. Players take control of Edge Maverick (no joke) and his motley crew, as they, well, do that stuff that we described just before this

sentence. Fans know who they are, no one else will be convinced.

It's bad enough that *Star Ocean* is dull, samey and something you've played a thousand times before. But these problems are exacerbated by the archetypal problems JRPGs suffer from: astonishingly bad voice acting, a design template that is the same as anything else in the genre, no indication of where you're supposed to be going or why you would be going there (which can naturally only be remedied by talking to everyone in the world map – twice) and a reliance on grinding that we would happily see cast off into the nether regions of MMORPGs.

It's one thing to complain about difficulty, but quite another to take umbrage with a

peculiar system that places save points once every hour or so, meaning when you die 54 minutes into your quest, you have to go back to the last point. It's lazy and it encourages a boring style of play that avoids all progress.

Good points? Well, combat is reasonably interesting but generally broken when it

Combat is reasonably interesting but generally a bit broken

comes down to it – allies tend to do nothing or get killed, enemies gang up on the player character and it's too easy to get cornered and beaten to the ground with no way of getting back up. All in all, it's a shoddy combat system. Which makes it more difficult to put up with as every so often it has flashes of brilliance.

More a slog than a game, it's hard to recommend *Star Ocean* to anyone other than those who have a lot of spare time and can actually be bothered with it.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Star Ocean isn't a bad game, it's just another example of uninspired, boring design with some mildly interesting – but ultimately broken – combat scenarios.

63%



PSP

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3

This game has taught us 'other than honourable discharges' exist



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Computer
Entertainment

Developer
Slant Six Games

Price
£24.99

Players
1-16

Genre
Tactical third-person
shooter

Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi Multiplayer,
Infrastructure Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, TV In/Out

Age Rating
16

Website
www.socom.com

The *SOCOM* series has faltered on home consoles, first losing its footing on PS2 and soon after falling completely arse over tit on PS3.

While all this flapping and flailing was going on at home, though, those playing the series on the move have been treated to some half-decent games. *Fireteam Bravo 3* is another to add to this list of surprisingly passable shooters, although it is plagued by many of the faults of its forebears.

The story is instantly forgettable, and is told in such a hilariously po-faced manner that it would be too easy to mock it (terrorists attacking 'Western interests', eh?). Ignore it, unless you're 14, male and American. Once past that you have a functional, reasonably fun squad-based shooter that takes you through a few campaigns around a fictional country in Eastern Europe. It's as simple as you would expect really, and doesn't take too long to finish, but it's smooth, looks good and can actually captivate for short bursts – given the opportunity. While we haven't had a chance to test online modes, we know these will add a fair amount of fun to proceedings,



Stealth is an option, but is far too fiddly to implement.



See – an attack on 'Western interests'. Brilliant.

so long as the support for co-op and suchlike works smoothly.

Controls are cleaned up from past iterations, but still suffer from being too fiddly at times. The sequence of menus to be navigated to tell your men to hold position shouldn't be as drawn out as it is. There's also the fact that, while *SOCOM* sells itself as a tactical shooter, it absolutely is not. This is run-'n'-gun by the book, with a couple of options to be stealthy or breach, bang and clear thrown in (seemingly to remind you of what you're missing out on with *SWAT 4* only being available on PC and showing us how

miraculously good tactical, squad-based shooters can be). The limitations of the control scheme actually lead in to why there is such a lack of viable tactical options in the game, so this isn't a problem that can be overcome with quick solutions. *Fireteam*



As before, targeting locks bypass the need for aiming.

It's smooth, looks good and can actually captivate for short bursts – given the chance

Bravo 4 needs a rethink if it's a series that's ever going to be pushing for a better mark.

As it stands, there's still too much wrong with *Fireteam Bravo 3* for us to recommend it as anything more than a cheap purchase or rental. You can have fun with it, just not a massive amount.

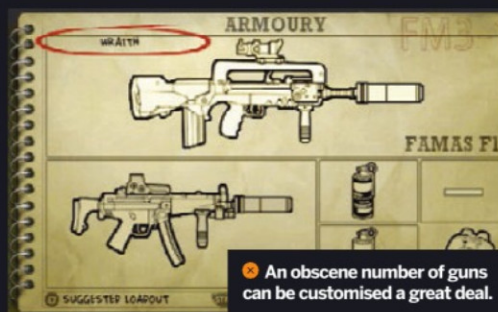
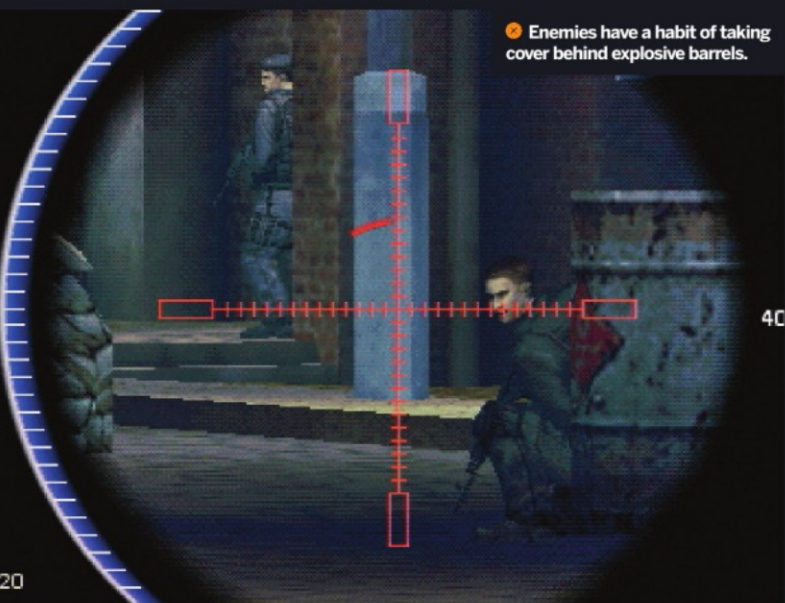
Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Fireteam Bravo is a series that seems to be improving, albeit at a snail's pace, and number three in the series is no different. It's humourless, but functional and quite fun.

71%

Enemies have a habit of taking cover behind explosive barrels.



An obscene number of guns can be customised a great deal.

In this series



SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 2 Issue 154
A decent effort that is hampered by poor controls. 70%

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days

"Not on my watch, Monsieur Napoleon Bonerhard!"



DETAILS

Publisher
NIS Europe
Developer
Nippon Ichi
Price
£24.99
Players
1
Genre
Strategy/RPG
Supports
TV In/Out
Age Rating
12
Website
<http://disgaea.us/d2psp/>

We realise that the line quoted above doesn't really serve to introduce the game reviewed on this page, and that it makes no real sense out of context, but to be honest with you, we don't care. We just put it there because it was funny, and we don't feel the need to justify. If you've got a problem with stuff just being chucked in for the sheer hell of it, without any particular justification then, sorry, you're really not going to like *Disgaea 2*. You also might not like it if you take issue with a bit of casual racism directed at the French.

We love the French, really we do, but we love *Disgaea's* oddball brand of humour even more. So much so that we're prepared to turn a blind eye to Frenchist jokes that would make even Michelle of ze Resistance flush with embarrassment. Now go away or we shall taunt you a second time.

So yes, if you're already familiar with the series, then you'll know what to expect from

Fun, complicated, completely unnecessary – exactly what *Disgaea* games are all about

Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days. In fact, you may have played it already on the PS2, under a slightly different name, *Disgaea 2: Cursed Memories*. This is pretty much the same game on a different platform, with the only major difference being that the Magichange feature, first introduced in *Disgaea 3*, has been thrown in. It allows you to temporarily turn your monsters into weapons. It's fun, complicated, completely unnecessary – it's exactly what *Disgaea* games are all about.

The first *Disgaea* took the traditional turn-based strategy RPG template and made it huge and complex and in-depth to the point of parody and *Disgaea 2* is really just a refinement of this idea. It plays pretty much exactly the same as the first game, just with a new story, new levels, a few minor new features and a few minor issues

● If you can't see what's going on here it's because a) what's happening is pretty weird, and b) the graphics are rubbish.



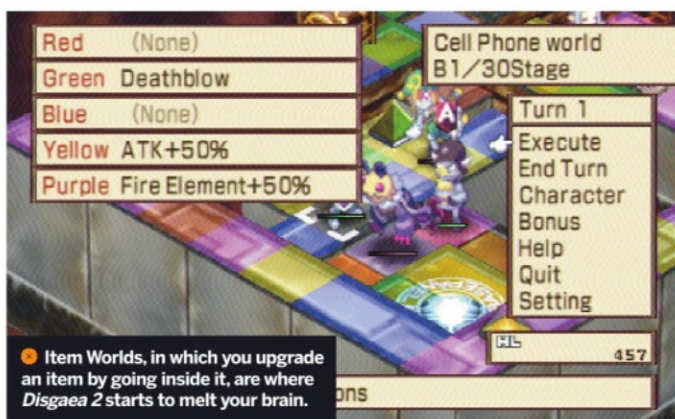
ironed out. It's a better game than *Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness*, but perhaps not a necessary one if you've already got its predecessor. Certainly not if you've only plumbed, say, 250 hours into that so far and are therefore nowhere near done with it yet. For the uninitiated looking for a fun and engrossing time sink for their PSP, though, we can't recommend *Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days* highly enough.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

Genuinely funny humour meets a great turn-based battle system and ludicrous levels of depth for those fond of levelling up ad nauseam. Our only issue is the ground it treads is just a little familiar.

87%



Or you could try



Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness Issue 161
Possibly the best strategy RPG ever made on your PSP.
What's not to love? 92%



DETAILS

Publisher
Blackbean
Developer
Milestone
Price
£39.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Driving
Supports
720p, PlayStation
Network, DualShock 3
Age Rating
3
Website
www.blackbeangames.
com



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Superstars V8: Next Challenge

Just like last year's model

The last V8 game wasn't broken in any way, it just lacked any real draw for anyone other than lovers of all things BMW. After extensive research with *Superstars V8: Next Challenge* – the latest in the series – we can safely say that hardly anything has changed. At all. Really, it's quite daft.



You still have a selection of BMWs, Jaguars and the like, as well as Chryslers and Cadillacs, and there are still a handful of race modes to select from, too. It's all very safe, and all very dull, and all very not *Gran Turismo 5*.

It's clearly made by passionate people with knowledge on the subject matter, but it lacks any real spark to draw in anyone beyond the usual fans. At the same time, though, it doesn't come across as a game that's made to draw in anyone other than fans, so at least Blackbean knows its audience – that much we can't argue. Still, six months between this release and the last title in the series – *Superstars V8 Racing* – and very few real differences between the two makes us quite mad, as it makes the



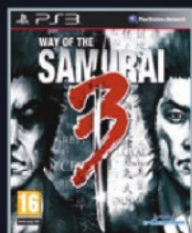
game a more cynical attempt and even less impressive. A few new cars and a few new tracks don't justify two full-price releases in the space of half a year. For the next V8 might we suggest waiting a while, and using that time to add more things that will actually draw non-fans in?

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Just like the last game, there's nothing fundamentally wrong with *Next Challenge*. But then that's the main issue – it's just like the last game. There is no point in picking this one up if you own the last game, released just six months ago.

55%



DETAILS

Publisher
Gamebridge
Developer
Acquire
Price
£39.99
Players
1
Genre
Beat-'em-up/
Sandbox
Supports
720p
Age Rating
16
Website
www.gamebridge.
co.uk

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Way Of The Samurai 3

A game where you can kick an old lady with no pants on

Usually when you play a bad videogame, you can easily spot exactly where the developer has gone wrong. Usually it's simply down to laziness, or a lack of imagination, or sometimes over-ambition. It's not often that

It's just not enjoyable in any conceivable way whatsoever

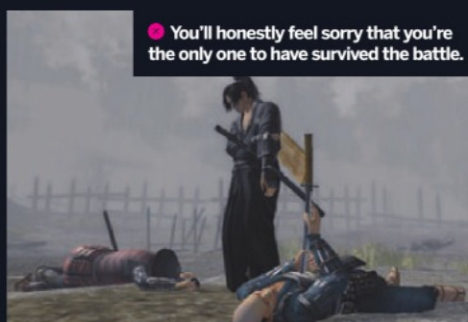
a game is so bad in so many different ways that you can't even begin to fathom what the developer's intentions were or at what point



they appear to have gone astray. *Way Of The Samurai 3* is that bad.

Acquire has made a game, the selling point of which is that you're supposed to play it from the beginning over and over. At least that would be the selling point if anyone of sound mind could possibly want to play this horrendous, embarrassing mess once, never mind several times. It's just not enjoyable in any conceivable way whatsoever.

It looks shhhhh... rubbish, the combat is terrible, the cause-and-effect logic the narrative is supposed to hinge on doesn't



make sense and most of the time you don't know what you're doing and don't seem to be making any noticeable progress.

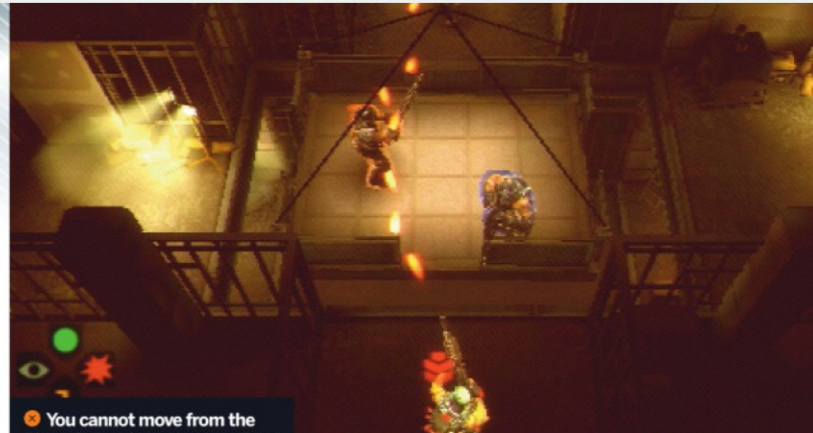
It's actually difficult to find the words to sum *Way Of The Samurai 3* up. At frequent intervals during our time with the game, there was little more to say than 'What?', 'Eh?' and 'Huh?' It doesn't even begin to be good at any point at all. The only entertaining thing about it is that it's occasionally so bad it's hilarious.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

So bad we actually feel a little bit upset. That it felt like a huge weight lifting off our shoulders each and every single time we died should tell you all you need to know.

16%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Friendly fire is on, which is daft as the AI is an idiot.

You cannot move from the lift and enemies only come from four directions in this section.

\$89,700

Army Of Two: The 40th Day

Two times the portable fun? Categorically not

DETAILS

Publisher EA
Developer Buzz Monkey
Price £29.99
Players 1-2
Genre Shoot-'em-up
Supports Ad-hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, TV In/Out
Age Rating 15
Website www.armyoftwo.com

The PSP version of *The 40th Day* is a broken mess in single-player; this much is evident from just a short time with the game. A top-down, two-stick shooter (with the face buttons acting as the second stick) that could be a bit

in the way of incoming enemy fire is utterly ridiculous. This isn't being needlessly harsh – the game verges on unplayable at times, and this is playing from a shop-bought copy so there can be no cries of 'early code!' or any other excuses. It's just shonky.

This isn't being needlessly harsh – the game verges on unplayable at times

of fun with someone else is rendered a joke by AI that simply doesn't function properly. Half the time your partner won't shoot an enemy, even when set to 'aggressive', at many points they become stuck behind scenery and their tendency to simply stand

The PSP version follows the same story as its console big brother, including the same ridiculously

poor 'moral' choices – something rendered even less impactful than last time around on account of the super-deformed, cartoony look of the game. Backgrounds and ambient effects look pretty decent, but characters themselves look awful.

It's not totally without merit, but *Army Of Two: The 40th Day* on PSP is absolutely not worth a purchase at all. That is unless you have a mate who also has a PSP and a copy of the game and is also willing to play with you (unlikely), or you enjoy holding one button to beat a game.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

In points it's pretty, in fewer points it's a bit of fun. The vast majority of *The 40th Day*, though, is a broken mess and a complete missed opportunity for something that could once have been a good idea.

45%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Puzzle Chronicles

Don't you mean "Quest"? Oh, no – you don't

DETAILS

Publisher Konami
Developer Infinite Interactive
Price £29.99
Players 1-2
Genre Puzzle
Supports Ad-hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, Infrastructure Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, TV In/Out
Age Rating 12
Website www.konami.com/games/puzzle-chronicles/

Picture the scene: Mitch and Brad work for Infinite Interactive, creator of the *Puzzle Quest* series. They need to come up with a new game to release on PSP, but they're struggling. This is where we enter the conversation:

"We need something new... but what?"
"I have an idea. It's bold, but it could work."
"What is it?"

"We do the same thing again, but we make the gems fall like they do in *Tetris*."

"I... like it. But what if people say it's just like *Tetris*?"

"Hmm... we could always – y'know..."

"You're not going to say what I think you're going to say, are you?"

"It's desperate times, Mitch."

"I know, Brad, but this is a bit too far."



What a thrilling way in which to settle a dispute.



This is a map. It sounds more exciting than it is, which is saying something.

"I don't care – we should make the gems come in sideways."

They then threw in a few mini-games that reverted the gem-dropping mechanic to vertical before retiring to the pub – a day's work well done and a game designed.

If you've played and enjoyed *Puzzle Quest* then *Chronicles* won't excite you. It's every standard-fare puzzle game ever made with the standard-fare RPG and adventure elements of *Puzzle Quest*, as they were a good idea once. Frankly, it's a boring idea.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

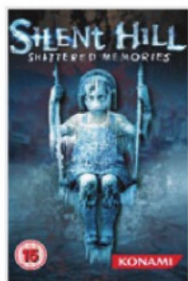
This is not a £30 game, it's a Mini with some fancier window-dressing. It's also exactly the same as every other puzzle game ever made, especially *Puzzle Quest*. It's fun and distracting, but too familiar and boring to be recommended.

61%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Silent Hill: Shattered Memories



DETAILS

Publisher

Konami

Developer

Climax

Price

£29.99

Players

1

Genre

Adventure

Supports

Ad-hoc Wi-Fi Multiplayer,

Infrastructure Wi-Fi

Multiplayer, PS2/PS3

Link-up, Game Share, TV

In/Out

Age Rating

15

Website

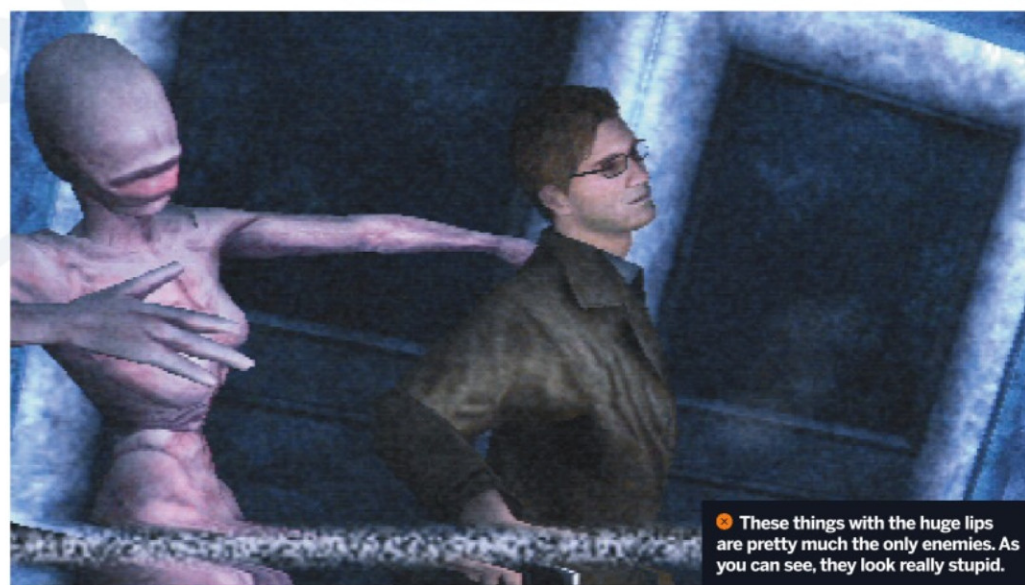
www.konami.com/
games/shsm

For people who are scared of gameplay

We nearly fell asleep playing *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories*. Honestly we did. Now, to be honest, this had more to do with going to bed too late the night before than anything else, but that doesn't excuse how dull and uneventful it is. There's barely anything to do and nothing of any real consequence ever seems to happen. Plus we can honestly say we weren't even remotely scared once. It barely even feels like a horror game at all. We'll tell you what it does feel like, though – a Wii game. And you know why? Because that's what it is.

Lacks atmosphere thanks to slow pacing and dated survival-horror devices

There are three main types of gameplay in *Shattered Memories*. One is walking around, occasionally pressing $\times$ when prompted, the next is *running* around occasionally pressing $\times$, $\square$, $\bigcirc$ or $\triangle$ when prompted, and the third is grabbing and moving things.



The grabbing and moving things gameplay is where the Wii influence really shows.

Remember how it used to be enough just to walk up to something and

press $\times$ to open it and find out that the bloody key you've been seeking for half an hour isn't bloody well in there either? It's not enough any more. Now, once you've gone up to something and pressed $\times$, you then switch to a first-person view and have control over a hand-shaped cursor. Move the cursor over the thing in front of you and at some point it'll turn from a pointing hand into an open hand. This is your cue to hold down the $\times$ button to grab and move the cursor in

order to move whatever you've grabbed. We can see how this kind of nonsense caters to your average Wii owner's bizarre need to feel like they're making the exact same physical motions as the character they're playing as, but in a PSP game it's tedious. At one point we found a box with six different drawers in it. We had to open them all one by one, and they were *all* empty. Yes, Climax has succeeded in making the process of finding out that something contains absolutely nothing of use, even more tedious than it's ever been before.

Presentation-wise, *Shattered Memories* is of high quality. The environments are detailed and the lighting effects very strong considering the PSP's limited power, but despite this it still lacks atmosphere thanks to unnecessarily slow pacing and a host of trite, dated survival-horror devices.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

It's not scary, it's full of lazy clichés, it's blatantly been designed for the Wii, there's nothing to do, there's very little logic involved in any of it and the closest it got to giving us nightmares was when we almost fell asleep. Boring.

52%



In this series



Silent Hill: Homecoming Issue 174
Some new ideas meet creaking, dated tradition.
Similar to *Shattered Memories*, then. 64%

100% ESSENTIAL 0% FAIR PowerStation

The No.1 tips magazine for PlayStation and Xbox addicts!



13,750 CHEATS INSIDE!

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REVIEWS, GUIDES, TIPS, CHEATS, TROPHIES & ACHIEVEMENTS FOR:

MAG, Mass Effect 2,
Modern Warfare 2,
Aliens Vs Predator,
BioShock 2, Dante's
Inferno, plus more!

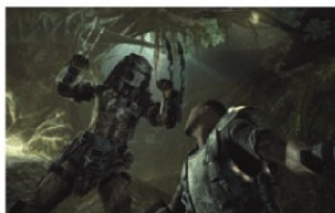


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YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...



Aliens vs connection error

The long-awaited online multiplayer demo of *Aliens Vs Predator* didn't actually work on release. The initial download left most players sitting in matchmaking, waiting for something to happen before they gave up and went to play something that worked. Sega soon released a fixed demo, meaning you can still try before you buy. Or just read *Play* 189's review.



Keen research

Halfbrick's recent Mini, *Age Of Zombies*, was released in February. What you may not know, however, is the kind of research the development team did to make the game the best they could: they went back in time. Creative consultant Anthony Hansen, learned "how to make moonshine in the Thirties" and lead artist Murray Lancashire "liked shooting cavemen".



Corporate card day celebrations

Everyone's favourite card-giving day (if you actually get a card) was celebrated at Home with a few temporary additions. The *SingStars* space received a Valentines Day-themed dance space along with a game titled *Stupid Cupid*. This was backed up by a few items of clothing for avatars, each with a suitably 'witty' slogan.



THOSE LEFT BEHIND

Are online shooters forgetting their core audience? We ask DICE and Splash Damage what they think

There have been a lot of online shooters released recently and a lot of claims that they're 'dumbing down' the experience by catering for a more mass market. We don't think this is true, as any committed *MW2* player will tell you – or any dedicated MAG clansman, for that matter. Nevertheless, we put these charges to a couple of developers of recent FPSs, to see if they're even aware they're expected to be catering for the 'hardcore', or if the expected setting these days is to cope exclusively with the demands of those not as experienced with games.



Gordon Van Dyke, producer on *Bad Company 2*.

Richard Ham, creative director on Splash Damage's *Brink*, had this to say: "We're working hard to ensure that *Brink* has plenty to offer both experienced pros and newcomers to online shooters." He went on: "The main way we address this is through server

settings. There will be two broad types of *Brink* servers when we ship: 'Standard' and 'Hardcore'. We've set standard up to be more inviting: friendly fire is turned off, voice chat is only between friends and so on. But if you go into a hardcore match, you'll find that the game can be very unforgiving." In other words, it'll be a mode that we're unlikely to be going into much, as we already lose far too much online.

If you go into a hardcore match, you'll find that the game can be very unforgiving

The recently released *Bad Company 2* also waded into the debate, offering players a 'hardcore mode'. In this mode kill cams are switched off, there is no real HUD to speak of and damage is increased exponentially – some might say to 'realistic' levels. Speaking to Gordon Van Dyke, producer on *BC2* at DICE, about the concessions designers have to make these days was revealing. He said that, above

all else, it's about making a perfect, undiluted mix and knowing who your game is for. The addition of hardcore mode is just one of these elements, and one that surely shows DICE know very much who its audience is. The company has a lot of experience with the market and this is just a small part of its stab to reclaim those the *Battlefield* series may have lost to the lure of *MW2*.

So has the increase in popularity of gaming hurt the experience for the purists, the experts and the 'hardcore'? We don't think so – and with developers like these going out of their way not only to acknowledge concerns but to tackle them, too, the future looks bright for the one-hit kills, 'realism' modes and absentee HUDs. Once again gaming has proven that there is indeed a niche for everyone, and no one gets left behind.



EA WANT MOORE DLC

Play spoke to EA's Peter Moore on the future of physical media

The future of gaming lies away from the boxed products and physical media we all know and (kind of) love right now. That is, if EA Sports' president Peter Moore is to be believed. Speaking to **Play** while sat in a plush executive box at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge, Moore explained why he saw the future away from discs and closer to hard drives.

Moore said: "Nothing lasts forever. Think of music... you go from that and you think of how technology evolves. I mean, you look at it now and how many of us actually buy physical media at all in the world of CDs? We typically don't any more." He went on: "We [EA] are different, we're interactive content – it's very large file sizes, a slightly different experience to say the least. But there will become a time – it could be decades away



It won't be for a while, but new *FIFAs* might not be available on shelves in future.

Nothing lasts forever. How many of us buy physical media in the world of CDs?

– where physical media will no longer exist, that tray that pops out won't exist and everything will be downloadable."

We were quick to assume this meant confirmation that *FIFA 20* would be released solely as a download, and so questioned

Moore on the subject in order to get a real scoop. Unfortunately, he wasn't too willing to offer us anything beyond speculation, stating: "It's not an announcement,

but yeah – of course ultimately [physical content] goes away. Everything goes away eventually." Before adding, rather ominously: "Including ourselves."

To read more of this interview head to our sister site NowGamer.com.



Affable, polite and a good sense of humour: Peter Moore would have no problem writing a truthful personals ad.

NO DOWNLOADABLE FANTASY

Ignore the rumours: here's the truth on FFXIII and DLC

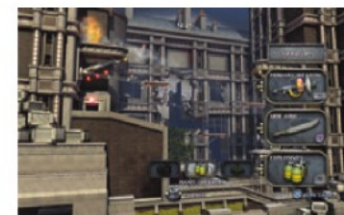


This is all you'll be seeing of *FFXIII*, with no DLC on the way.

Final Fantasy XIII will not be receiving any DLC, according to interviews with a few of those intimately involved in the creation of the game.

Speaking to the PlayStation Blog, *FFXIII*'s producer Yoshinori Kitase and director Motomu Toriyama said in a joint statement: "Regarding the DLC content, we feel that the final product is 100 per cent enjoyable... it's the complete package. So we're not planning any DLC at this time." So that's us told. But what about the rumours claiming the game had elements cut on purpose to be released at a later date in DLC form? "In regard to the rumoured cut content, we feel it was taken out of context. There are a lot of ideas that are brought to the table, and then the team takes the best ideas out of those, and the final product is polished that way. There was content that were 'ideas' that didn't make the final content, but the team isn't looking to release that as downloadable content."

POINT YOUR BROWSERS...



(Price) Crash Commando

Head to the PSN and visit the page where *Crash Commando* is located. This great little combat game has had its price permanently reduced to a very tempting £6.29. In fact, we'd be even more tempted to buy it were it not for the fact that we already own it. It's a great distraction for the price and well worth picking up if you want a different kind of online warfare.



I am The Game

The Game's round one came to an end in February but round two is already underway. For those who have no idea what we're talking about, welcome to the club. PS3 *The Game* is a worldwide, team-based event where anyone can get involved – each round lasts three months and the competition is running until November 2010. Head to www.ps3-thegame.com to learn more.



Free Toad

You're going to want to be quick on this one, as it's only valid for another week from the day this issue hits shelves. Still, *Blue Toad Murder Files Episode 3* is available for free on PSN until 25 March, when it will return to a normal, human price that isn't as tempting. We weren't huge on the first two episodes, but they do offer a bit of fun while they last. Plus: it's free. Stop complaining.

MOD WORSHIP

A beginner's guide to getting the most from ModNation Racers

The *ModNation Racers* beta is unfortunately over, but the brief glimpse we got of it was enough to convince us it's a game to look forward to. It also gave us an insight into the extraordinary amount that could be achieved with United Front Games' creation tools while only having access to a small portion of the final number of items and variables. It was an exciting beta to be involved in, but in preparation for the final game we thought we would walk you through some of our top tips for creating Mods, Karts and Tracks in *ModNation Racers*.

MODS

SNAKE? SNAKE!!!



A HAIRSTYLE with a bandana made us think of Solid Snake. We adjusted the size and position of his eyes, nose and ears, then we used the colour wheel to set the exact colours we wanted.



THE MOUTHS ON offer weren't great so we skipped to the beard. This one is a bit bushy, but didn't look too bad. The colour we used for Snake's hair remains saved so we could use it again on the beard.



CLOTHING WAS LIMITED in the beta, but there was still plenty. Going back to our colour palette we chose the bandana colour and then used the wheel to make Snake's trousers lighter.



WE PUT A long-sleeve top on Snake here and then added a vest, too. Again, all the colours we had already used remained saved to choose again. Then we picked out a flesh tone for his body.



THE HAIRSTYLE WAS good but we still needed more hair at the back. The Odds 'N Ends menu has tufts of hair. We put one in place and used the Duplicate tool to copy and paste them across his neck.



OUR LAST MISSION was to add detail. In the Body menu there are a selection of stickers that can be added to the head, arms, body and legs. Here we used gradient shapes to age Snake a little.

MOD OF WAR



WE BEGAN KRATOS with beard, eye, nose and mouth placement. A gradient sticker behind the eye gave us his scar and a solid chevron shape gave us a good start for his iconic red tattoo.



THERE ARE RECTANGLE stickers, but we selected a solid square then went to the advanced editing tools by hitting **E** and were given control of scaling the sticker to create the shape we needed.



IF YOU WANT to paint something on a Mod's head take it in small steps. As objects approach the top of the head they start to rotate awkwardly. Duplicate takes the pain out of this method.



THAT CHEVRON SHAPE proved handy as the tattoo continues around from Kratos's head, around his back, up his side and towards his arm. Duplicating and advance editing made this simple.



STICKERS CAN BE placed in sectors, but don't travel beyond them. We had to create the joins by lining them up between the body, head or arms. Advance editing gave us precision control.



TO SAVE KRATOS'S blushes we gave him some clothes and added some beard details. We found it easiest to think about the simplest shapes we could use to re-create the features we were looking to do.



KARTS

FORD GRAN TORINO



WE HAD A think about iconic cars from our past and settled quickly on the Ford Gran Torino from *Starsky & Hutch*. Our first lesson here was that hood stickers could be moved to the rear of the car.



WITH OUR RED paint job in place and the white stripe started, we needed to get the stripe down the sides of the car. By extending the height of a triangle sticker we got the pointy line we needed.



HOLDING IN **L2** and pressing **△** copies stickers. We copied the triangle, placed it on the left side of the car, and flipped it around. Once again the Advanced Edit functions were handy here.



AGAIN, STICKERS DON'T overlap beyond the sectors so to join up designs we needed to get our placement right. Those chevron stickers proved handy again in getting this design together.



TO GET A retro look we picked out some Old School tyres from the Wheels menu. These helped to get that Seventies look we were going for. Seats and steering wheels were more limited in the beta.



THE BETA HAD a selection of hood ornaments and antennas to put on our Kart. These hood objects can also be moved to the rear of the car if that's where you want them.

SUBARU IMPREZA



OUR SEARCH FOR iconic cars reminded us they didn't get much more important on the PlayStation than Colin McRae's legendary Subaru Impreza. A careful selection of stickers got us started there.



MORE DUPLICATING HELPED us to repeat the star shape to create a logo on the side of the Impreza. After duplication we edited the sticker, so it was easy scaling them down before placing them.



ONCE WE HAD a design we were happy with we could link the stickers together on the Panel menu with **L1**. Once linked in a group we could edit them collectively or copy them together for pasting.



TO GET THE same design on the left panel as on the right just Insert the group with **Ⓢ**. We could then flip, rotate and position this group of stickers to get it the same on both sides of the Kart.



ONCE COPIED THESE designs can go on any of the panels and be edited further. We placed it on the Kart's hood and at the rear based on some photography we used as reference.

DON'T FORGET...

Share and share alike in ModNation



search for it more easily. You can also decide whether or not you want people to be able to edit your creation once it's been downloaded or whether they can download it at all. That way if you want to keep your Mod or Kart to yourself you can get it rated by the community without seeing it pop up everywhere.

ONCE YOU'VE CREATED your ultimate Mod, Kart or Track share it with the community and get some feedback. From the Creation Station you can access the Share point to upload your hard work and download the work of others. Once you've chosen the item you're going to upload write a short description and choose some keywords so people can

MOD WORSHIP



TOP OF THE MODS

Ten of our favourite community creations from the beta

Predator

by jeokerr
A fine example of sticker use and duplication to create specific hair types.



Hellghast Soldier

by ssaannttii
We were impressed by how ssaannttii had made the eyes flash and alter.



Clank

by Munty13
Eyes were limited, but using stickers this Clank came together nicely.



IronMan

by EckoDS
We're in awe of this creation's excellent detail and shading.



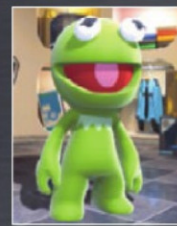
Old Snake

by Dancinguy
We like our Snake, but if we're being honest then this one is much better.



Kermit the frog

by Desertime
Another smart use of the tools as a biker helmet creates Kermit's mouth.



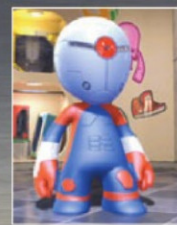
Chun-Li

by rockcut777
We have no idea how rockcut777 did Chun-Li's hair buns. Brilliant.



GREY-FOX

by TOMMO121081
GREY-FOX uses different materials to create rubber and metallic effects.



Two-Face

by DeaditeGirl
This would have taken a lot of time and patience to re-create half a suit and face.



Isaac Clarke

by Dr_Paradox
There's so much detail in this re-creation of *Dead Space*'s hero.



TRACKS

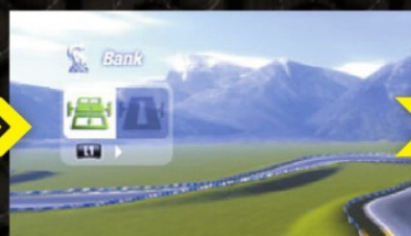
TRIAL MOUNTAIN



WE COULDN'T THINK of a better track to test *ModNation*'s customisation and creation tools than Trial Mountain, the classic course from another Sony racer, *Gran Turismo*. We've gone for the GT4 incarnation based on a printed map.



ONCE THE TRACK was laid down we gave it a quick test drive in its base form. There was a little too much banking in the corners we noticed, so that would need to be edited. Any changes to layout could be done by Repaving the track.



FROM THE EDIT Track menu we selected the Bank tool to adjust the height of the left and right side of the road. Hitting **LT** sets the previous section of track as the default so we could even out track in bigger chunks more easily.



THIS MENU ALSO allows us to edit the Lift of a track to create hills and trenches in the road. The long straight about halfway around Trial Mountain is a bit of a climb so we added that in piece by piece to get it right.



ONCE WE WERE happy with the layout and topography of the track we could start populating the world. We could do this first, but for our purposes it made more sense to place the track first and get the all-important mountains in second.



AS THE TRACK name suggests there are plenty of mountains, which this Alpine base stage worked well with. The final game will have more base levels to build upon, but we could still have changed the foreground surfaces if we wanted.



MOUNTAINS ARE VIRTUALLY spray on in *ModNation*. We went Mod Terrain, chose the type of mountain we wanted to create and the longer we held down **X** the taller the mountain got. The D-pad can change the scale beforehand.



THE KEY MOUNTAINS and rock formations were in place so we got on with the tree line around the track. Some parts of Trial Mountain have a lot of trees, but that was no trouble. Again it was like spraying them on to the track.



BEFORE WE WENT into Prop Placement we were given the choice to place them along the track or anywhere. For our first pass we decided on the first option. We could then fill in any gaps freehand later if we needed to.



HOLDING DOWN X and passing over the same areas again and again with **LT** we could make the tree line thicker and thicker. Many props are like this, such as some buildings, but most need to be placed one by one.



MODNATION RACERS ALSO has a few advertising hoardings to choose from and there were some key spots around the last big corner of Trial Mountain that needed these items. *ModNation* will automatically turn them to face the track.



AS WELL AS building upon the land we can also eat into it using the same toolset as that for building mountains. Hitting **LT** reverses the process and allowed us to create a nice big trench at the end of that famous long straight.

POLE POSITIONS A handful of the best Karts from the beta



BATMAN!! CAR
by MAD_MAX_SW9

An obvious move perhaps, but that bat symbol wouldn't have been very easy to create.



HULK 1
by ryback2007

Some good use of the decals available, as well as some good scaling, makes this a winner.



Cop on a Rampage!
By Mr-Steroid

We like the imagery in this Kart, with blood on the fender and bullet holes down the sides.



Gran Turismo 5 Kart
by ssaannttii

Another simple but effective Kart that managed to create a recognisable logo and use it well.



Neos Car
by SmokinNevilsHaze

Placing all those letters for the *Matrix* code would have taken an age. Impressive.

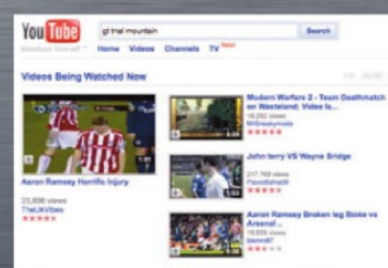


KEY RESOURCES

Important resources to help you improve your modding



GOOGLE IMAGE SEARCH: There are few image resources better than Google's. Whether you're looking for classic car designs, popular videogame or cartoon characters or even famous circuits, you may as well start here. We found it particularly useful to print out a copy of the Trial Mountain course from *Gran Turismo 4* and then annotate it with details of where certain items needed to be placed and where the track would need adjusting in height or width.



YOUTUBE: Video footage is essential if you want to re-create an accurate racetrack. There are lots of great video websites, but again few are as comprehensive as YouTube. Watching the Trial Mountain videos on the site we were able to annotate our map more accurately as well as judge things such as the thickness of the tree cover, how the track dipped or rose and what aesthetic details we might need to re-create to add character to our version.



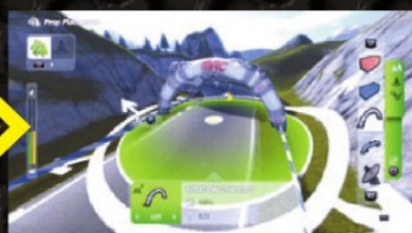
MOST OF THE important trackside features were done so it was safe to go freehand and start throwing some extra areas of raised ground to make sure Trial Mountain deserved its name. Scaling helped speed this process up.



WE NOTICED WATCHING a video of Trial Mountain from *Gran Turismo 4* that there was a Blimp sitting near the start line, which is visible as you make your final approach. Luckily the beta had a blimp that we could place in the right spot.



TRIAL MOUNTAIN ISN'T a very populated area in *Gran Turismo*, so what features it has become very important to re-creating it faithfully. These walkways for instance are one such feature that made our track more faithful.



WHILE THE FINAL game will allow for the creation of tunnels, the beta did not so we had to fake them for our track using these Inflatable Overpasses. Placing lots of them close together over the track looked a likely solution.



EVERY OBJECT PLACES a circle on the ground to show its centre point. By aligning these circles in overlapping positions one after another we could be sure we were leaving no gaps in our fake tunnel of overpasses.



AS YOU CAN see, the final effect was actually quite successful and went to show again just how versatile the creation tools in *ModNation Racers* could be, even with a limited number of items at our disposal in the beta.



WE WEREN'T SO lucky with the grandstands at the start line as we were with the tunnels. We couldn't find a way to fake those so we made do with some tents, trucks and a small amount of housing to make it look busy.



ONCE THE TRACK is put together and all the major features are in place it's probably time to go to the Elements menu. From here you can change the sun position, cloud cover and water level. We went for a morning sun look.



WHILE NOT STRICTLY traditional we thought we would jazz up some sections of Trial Mountain to make it more suitable for Kart racing. Placing boost pads at opposite sides of our long straights would keep drivers guessing.



DYNAMIC OBJECTS LIKE the boost pads and these Item Pods can be found in the prop menu and are a good way of tempting racers into trouble if you want to be devious. Racers will always attempt to chase them down.



ONCE WE HAD sorted all of that out it really only left us to give the track a test race. This can also be done within the editing menu, which populates the track with some AI to race against so you can make sure everything works.



THE RESULTS PROVED to be very favourable. Trial Mountain had plenty of character and the addition of Item Pods and boost pads made the racing that little bit more exciting. We were assured by *GT* fans that it was accurate, too.



"BioShock 2 is a very good game but it doesn't quite reach the masterwork status of the first game" 88%

Character choice doesn't seem to have much impact on gameplay, but they certainly look different to each other.



BioShock 2

Is more always wetter?

DETAILS

Publisher
2K Games
Developer
2K Marin/Digital
Extremes
Release Date
Out now
Price
£49.99
Players
1-10
Genre
First-person shooter
Supports
1080p, 1080i,
720p, DualShock
3, Downloadable
Content, Dolby
Digital 5.1

If there's one game that does not need a multiplayer mode, then it's *BioShock 2*. Upon completing the first *BioShock*, did anyone say, "Yeah, that was good, but what it really needed was some online deathmatches..."? No, no one did. In fact, most were agreed that it was an instant classic as it was, and immediately started it again from the beginning. So why does *BioShock 2* have multiplayer? Because 2K, like any other publisher these days, fears the pre-owned games market and will do anything it can to make you feel less inclined to trade it in once you've completed the single-player campaign. That's one reason there are key decisions within the campaign, one reason there are Trophies, one reason there is DLC promised and the main reason there is multiplayer.

So the reasons for its existence might have more to do with maximising revenue than anything else, but multiplayer *BioShock* is still no bad thing. You're getting more for your money, after all. But whether there's enough substance in *BioShock 2*'s competitive online

portion to really make it anything more than a fun diversion is a different matter. It's fun, no doubt about that, but Duty is sure to Call sooner or later and we're not sure if *BioShock 2* is going to hold onto that many players in the long-term.

Even now, the game's online population doesn't seem to be that high, with lobbies sometimes taking too long to fill up. And we're not surprised. There's really nothing wrong with seven modes and eight maps on offer here, but the whole time we were playing online, we were unable to shake off the feeling that we'd rather be playing either the *BioShock 2* campaign or *Modern Warfare 2* online. It reminded us very much of both, only not as good.

Digital Extremes has made numerous efforts to make the gameplay feel distinctly *BioShock*. Big Daddy suits feature as an uber-power-up, Little Sisters are used as flags, and environmental hazards such as water and flammable materials react to your weapons

and plasmids just as they do in single-player, but it still doesn't really feel like *BioShock*. It feels like a hectic, slightly comical deathmatch-centric game like *Unreal Tournament* or *Quake III*, which again is no bad thing. But it's not an essential thing either.

There are transparent efforts to appeal to the *Call Of Duty* crowd, too, with customisable

It's fun, no doubt about that, but Duty is sure to Call sooner or later

loadouts, levelling up (with Adam instead of XP) and bonuses awarded for the completion of Trials, which work exactly the same way as *COD*'s Challenges. But again, it's just not as compelling as *Modern Warfare 2*'s multiplayer. Not by a very long way.

It does work well, though, and it is enjoyable enough to be worth a bash. Combat is well-paced and satisfying, with enough depth to

online reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

ミナル



make you feel like you're improving each time you play. And it's technically pretty good, too. It's not quite as beautiful to behold as it is offline and lag does occasionally rear up when things get especially chaotic, but there are no problems likely to put you off completely. But not putting you off probably won't be enough to have most players favour *BioShock 2* over other online games – and one other online game in particular – for very long.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

A good effort that's perfectly entertaining in its own right, but still feels like it doesn't really belong in a *BioShock* game. Certainly a better 'bolted on' multiplayer mode than we've seen in some other titles (eg *The Darkness*), though.

★★★★★

COME TO DADDY

Big Daddies in multiplayer

IN MOST MULTIPLAYER modes the Big Daddy suit is a power-up that appears occasionally and can be picked up by any player. In Capture The Sister mode a random player on the defending team is chosen to start the match as a Big Daddy. Obviously the Big Daddy is very tough and is armed with a handful of proximity mines and a powerful bolt gun. But he's also slow and his health doesn't regenerate. In team modes the appearance of a Big Daddy can dramatically alter the way the game's going, with both teams needing to adjust their tactics accordingly.

PSN Roundup

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

We just got our asses kicked, pal!

Publisher: Sega Developer: Rebellion Price: £49.99 Players: 1-18 Genre: FPS/Stealth

Putting all three *Aliens Vs Predator* species against one another in conventional multiplayer game types doesn't really work all that well, so it's a good job Rebellion has come up with three decent match types tailored specifically to the *Aliens Vs Predator* universe. Best of the lot is Infestation, in which every player starts as a Marine then one random player is turned into an Alien, with each player he subsequently kills then turning Alien, too. It's very atmospheric, and not quite like any other multiplayer mode we've played before. Predator Hunt is similarly unique, although not quite as easy to get into. This time one player, and only ever one player at a time, is the Predator and must hunt the other players. Any Marine killing the Predator gets their turn to be the Predator. Finally there's the co-operative Survivor mode, which isn't original in the slightest, but it lends



itself perfectly to the *Aliens Vs Predator* licence. You and up to three other players playing as Marines must simply survive as wave upon wave of Aliens descend upon you. Yes... yes they are coming out of the walls. **GM**

★★★★★

MX VS ATV REFLEX

Testing your reflexes, and your patience

Publisher: THQ Developer: Rainbow Studios Price: £44.99 Players: 1-12 Genre: Racing

The online chunk of *MX Vs ATV Reflex* is reasonably well put together and runs reasonably fast and reasonably smoothly, even with a full quota of racers. Really, we have no complaints specifically about the online play here at all. The problem is that *MX Vs ATV Reflex* online is the same game as *MX Vs ATV Reflex* offline and so has the same infuriatingly twitchy physics and not particularly exciting atmosphere.

One thing we will say for it, though, is that if you find the AI in the single-player game isn't enough of a challenge, you'll be well catered for online. We came up against some stiff competition, which isn't surprising since the game came out in the US two months before it came out here, so those Americans have had a head start. Apparently, with enough patience



and persistence it is possible to overcome the haphazard physics and put in some truly impressive racing, but we'd rather have had better physics in the first place frankly. **GM**

★★★★★

VANCOUVER 2010

The winter takes it all

Publisher: Sega Developer: Eurocom Price: £44.99 Players: 1-4 Genre: Sports

As we said in our review last month, Eurocom has done a surprisingly good job on *Vancouver 2010*. There's not much variety or depth on offer, but what you do get is very polished. It's much the same online as well... or rather it's too much the same. In fact, it's the same to the point that, on most of the events you feel like you might as well be playing alone – you'd be waiting around less that way. It's not really the game's fault – it's the nature of most winter sports to involve turn-taking and little in the way of direct competition – but the fact still remains that online play adds little to the experience. Like most sports games, *Vancouver 2010* is far better suited to offline multiplayer, especially if you all get cowbells to ring while each player takes their turn. Yodelling



also adds to the atmosphere. We tried this online using a headset, but it wasn't the same, and we eventually just got kicked anyway. **GM**

★★★★★



Final Fantasy VIII GAME

Squaresoft's eighth fantasy still has what it takes

DETAILS

Publisher
 Square Enix
Developer
 Squaresoft
Release Date
 Out Now
Price
 £7.99
Players
 1
Genre
 RPG

When a game sells over 8.5 million copies you take notice of it. *Final Fantasy VIII* is one such game and while it doesn't quite reach the same scope and achievements set by its predecessor, it nevertheless remains a fantastic RPG that any fan of the genre needs to experience.

Interestingly, *Final Fantasy VIII*'s story is perhaps the weakest link in an otherwise strong chain of accomplishments. Set in an unnamed world, the eighth part of Square's popular franchise deals with the trials and tribulations of Squall Leonheart, a troubled individual with a mysterious past and a love of gunblades who teams up with the usual bunch of misfits to topple an evil malevolent queen. While *Final Fantasy VIII* goes through many twists and turns during its lengthy playtime it never quite manages to eclipse the epicness that *Final Fantasy VII* offers and while there are plenty of memorable moments you won't find anything on a par with key scenes like Aeris's death.

And yet while *Final Fantasy VIII*'s plot doesn't quite match the solid, if slightly generic tale told in *Final Fantasy VII*, its characters can easily hold their own against the likes of Cloud, Barret and Sephiroth. While some gamers claimed Squall Leonheart to be something of a miserable git, we've always found him rather refreshing and realistic and his journey from sulky teen to saviour is handled with far more skill than Squaresoft managed with Cloud. Other characters such as Squall's rival Seifer and his love interest Rinoa are just as ably handled and you really care about their outcomes by the game's epic end.

There's far more to *Final Fantasy VIII* than engaging characters and a typically barmy plot, though, and while its combat system is extremely similar to *Final Fantasy VII*'s there are plenty of new changes that will have stat fans in seventh heaven.

By far the most exciting additions are the GFs (Guardian Forces); huge summonable monsters that are linked to characters and provide all sorts of handy bonuses. By assigning or 'junctioning' GFs to characters you could give them different commands to use in battle, decide what new abilities your GFs would learn and even change your character's stats with spells you had

Final Fantasy VIII's characters can easily hold their own against the likes of Cloud, Barret and Sephiroth

discovered. Unlike previous games you use the ability Draw to suck magic from opposing enemies, which can then be stockpiled or used against them. It's not quite as mind-numbing to understand as *Final Fantasy VII*'s Materia, but it's nevertheless a pretty complex game mechanic that gives your characters amazing flexibility. Our favourite aspect of the GFs, though, is the ridiculous

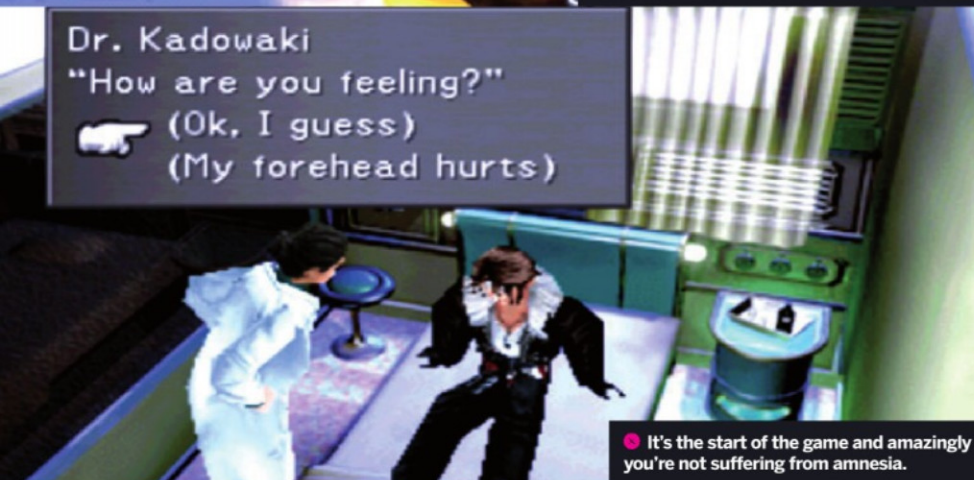
Store Reviews

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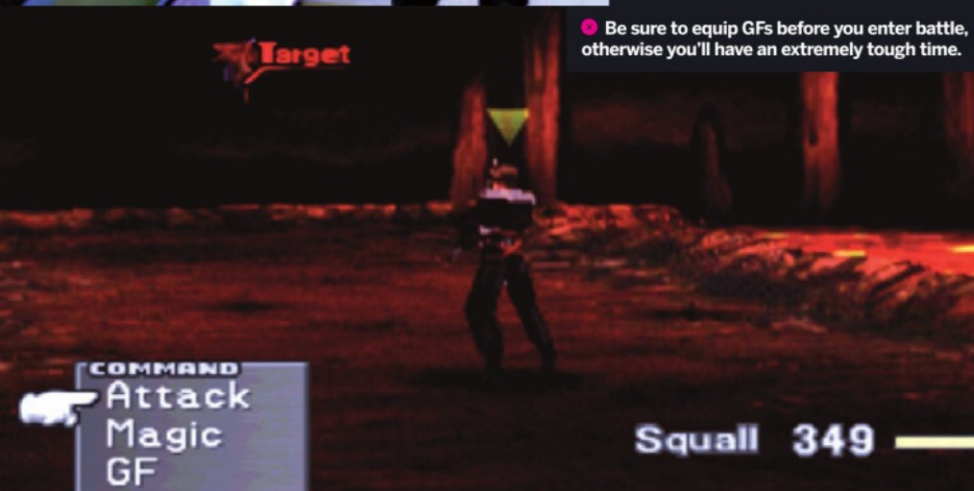
Store Roundup



● The Guardian Forces still look fantastic and have some truly remarkable looking attacks.



● It's the start of the game and amazingly you're not suffering from amnesia.



special moves they have access to, which in turn gives battles a truly epic feel.

Indeed, despite the low polygon counts and the now rather basic looking FMVs, *Final Fantasy VIII* still manages to impress in the aesthetics department mainly due to excellent character and location design and a truly exquisite score by Nobuo Uematsu. Yes, it looks rough around the edges but what do you expect from a 12-year-old game? An amazingly immersive RPG that should be in every gamer's collection.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

Final Fantasy VIII is a truly engaging RPG that's easily worth the paltry £8 asking price. If you've never experienced the game before then make sure it's the next thing you download.

90%

TRIAD TROUBLE

Fight monsters, play cards

ONE OF THE best additions to *FFVIII* is the Triple Triad mini-game that takes the form of a card game. Players choose a set number of cards from a pool – more can be collected or made throughout the game – and then battle on a three-by-three grid. The four sides of the cards, which depict monsters and bosses from the game, have a number assigned to them and players must take it in turns to lay cards on the grid. Lay a card that has a greater number to the one adjacent to it and you'll flip it to your colour. The player who controls the most cards wins. It's no *Magic: The Gathering*, but it's nevertheless a charming time-waster that can become just as engrossing as the main game.

DINER DASH GAME

Who said waiting on customers was boring?

Publisher Hudsonsoft Developer Gamelab Price £7.99 Players 1 Genre Puzzle/Strategy

DINER DASH IS something of a phenomenon, spawning 25 spin-offs and sequels since making its debut in 2003.



The popular casual game is now available on PSN and while the price is rather steep – it's free to download for PC gamers – it remains a fun timewaster. Taking on the role of Flo, you have to seat customers, take their orders, deliver their food then clear up. All this juggling gets pretty hectic, especially once the customers start increasing and it's a testament to Gamelab that the difficulty remains nicely balanced. Admittedly it gets repetitive extremely quickly but it's still good fun while it lasts.

66%

POLAR PANIC GAME

If Bomberman and Pengo had a baby

Publisher Valcon Games Developer Eiconic Games Price £7.99 Players 1-4 Genre Puzzle/Arcade

THE PSN STORE certainly isn't short of great puzzle games, so games like *Polar Panic* really need a neat gimmick in order to stand out. Sadly, this block-pushing puzzler just doesn't have the required staying power to justify its high price tag. While the multiplayer – which captures the manic frenzy of *Bomberman* – is fantastic, *Polar Panic* gets saddled with an extremely dull story mode and puzzles that often feel samey the further you get into the game.

There's a definite charm to *Polar Panic* due to its light and fluffy visuals, but like this month's *Diner Dash*, there's just not enough to keep you entertained.



65%

HUSTLE KINGS GAME

Become a digital hustler

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment Developer VooFoo Studios Price £6.29 Players 1-4 Genre Sports

HUSTLE KINGS HAS been out for a while now, but somehow it slipped through our PSN net.



We're glad we've finally downloaded it, though, as it plays an absolutely cracking game of pool.

Rife with options and different gameplay modes, *Hustle Kings* works so well because everything is super slick and easy to learn. The control system is extremely intuitive, but gives you amazing control over your cue, while the physics are exceptional and amazingly realistic. Best of all, though, is *Hustle Kings'* excellent online mode. Games are never laggy or difficult to join and it's a testament to the game's popularity that there's always people to play online. Great fun.

87%

FROGGER RETURNS GAME

Dull, dull, dull, dull, dull

Publisher Konami Developer Hijinx Games Price £3.99 Players 1-2 Genre Arcade

HOW ON EARTH do you bugger up something as simple as *Frogger*? Well, Hijinx Games



certainly knows how, as the developer has made a right mess of Konami's classic arcade game. First off the visuals are utterly atrocious and the chosen camera angle means that you'll constantly die because it's impossible to judge what you can and cannot jump on. Then there's the incredibly ropy collision detection to consider, the bland layout of each stage and the dull multiplayer modes on offer. Worst of all, though, is that despite this being 2010 Hijinx Games simply couldn't be bothered to implement any online play modes. Shocking, truly shocking.

35%

ASSASSIN'S CREED II: BATTLE OF FORLI DLC

Deadly? More like dead boring

Publisher Ubisoft Developer Ubisoft Montreal Price £3.19 Players 1 Genre Platformer

REMEMBER THOSE TWO 'corrupted' sequences in *Assassin's Creed*



II? Well here's the first one and if the second is as bland as this then we'd rather it stayed corrupted. While it helps to fill the rather large plot hole from the main game, the six missions take very little time to complete and are made even easier by all the weapon spawns that are available. Indeed, the only salvation of this DLC is that it's surprisingly cheap and allows you to once again use Leonardo's Flying Machine. A disappointing addition to an enjoyable game.

★★★★★

AGE OF BOOTY DLC

Map away to your heart's content

Publisher Capcom Developer Certain Affinity Price Free Players 1-4 Genre Strategy

AGE OF BOOTY is something of a hidden gem on PSN, so these free maps are a perfect way of



reacquainting yourself with this fun strategy title. In total there's an impressive 18 maps to wade through and the fun multiplayer experience Triple Trouble is now unlocked, adding yet another multiplayer gameplay mode. It all ties in nicely with a recent Trophy patch; meaning if you've never experienced Certain Affinity's charming little game, now is the perfect time to do so. The fact that you get all of this for gratis is the icing on the cake, so if you already own the game get all nine map packs immediately.

★★★★★

Including: Ten Of The Best... Snow & Ice Levels /// The Play Quiz /// Cult Heroes

Ten of the best...

...Snow & Ice Levels

Now that the terror of one of the wintriest winters in living memory is behind us, we think enough time has passed that we can laugh about it. And here to help us with that are some games...



Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots

Fans have a soft spot for the memories the Shadow Moses section of *MGS 4* evoke in Snake's mind, each played out through original audio snippets from Snake's last visit; that seen in *Metal Gear Solid* on PSone. Itself a classic piece of snowbound gaming, but one all the more resonant in HD.



Tomb Raider

Yes, this is back when videogames were a lot simpler. Back during a time when it was perfectly acceptable to name a level 'Caves'. Footprints in the snow were a new thing in 1996, even when the available memory only allowed for about three sets at once before they dissolved into the great digital beyond.



Modern Warfare 2

The use of snow and ice in 'Cliffhanger' is sublime. Climbing an ice wall, using a white-out as cover of stealthy takedowns, and ending in a snowmobile chase straight out of the James Bond book of absurdity. In fact, if anything, 'Cliffhanger' highlights just how many levels in the game are comparatively throwaway.



Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

Uncharted 2's snow and ice made a big impression. This was partly due to an almost believable level of visual sheen, but also because of the way Nathan was able to disturb the snow as he moved around. It just looked – almost – right. And almost is one hell of a lot closer than anyone has come before.



Final Fantasy VII

Final Fantasy VII is the best *Final Fantasy* game because of its mini-games. They were high-adrenaline punctuation points in the story, so good that you went and played them again and again in the Golden Saucer. The motorbike one was probably the best, but the snowboarding came in a very close second.



Guitar Hero: Metallica

After earning 72 stars in *Guitar Hero: Metallica*, you unlock a venue called Ice Cave. It's not a place Metallica have ever actually played during their history, it's simply a nod to the band's song *Trapped Under Ice*. The song doesn't feature in the game (it would be incredibly difficult to play) but there's a Trophy named after it.



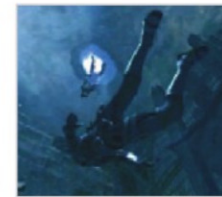
Colin McRae Rally

The Sweden stage in the original *Colin McRae Rally* was one of those game segments that truly separated the men from the boys. On your first attempt it seems absolutely impossible. But persistence pays off in the end and, once you master the ice driving technique, you get one of the most satisfying game experiences ever.



Star Wars Battlefront

Any *Star Wars* videogame worth its salt has a level set on the ice planet of Hoth. Why is this? Is it because of all of the ice and snow? Not really, no. The main reason is because Hoth is the planet where the rebels take down the mighty AT-ATs by tying their legs together and everyone knows doing that is frickin' awesome. The ice and snow is pretty cool, too.



Splinter Cell: Double Agent

What a way to start a game – beneath a patchy ice layer on which a wealth of enemies patrol. Not only is the use of ice incredibly original, it is also beautifully presented. The tension is palpable. Accidentally raise a guard's suspicion and they'll begin shooting holes in your cover in an effort to achieve a lucky shot.



Canis Canem Edit

Rockstar's *Canis Canem Edit* offers a number of snow and ice missions, including the Santa-themed 'He Knows If You've Been Naughty'. Offering seamless integration with the snow and ice itself – snowball fights, snowmen and so on – *Canis Canem Edit* has a wintry feel that other videogames somehow cannot muster.

GAME undeR Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...



DATE: 25 May 2177
Colonial Marine 2nd Battalion, 9th Regiment encounters this unknown species in a Chiswick garden. Squad returns to dropship for a big net. No sign of alien on return. Area secure.



DATE: 3 June 2177
In a Shrewsbury park, Colonial Marine scout reports "movement all over the place". Helmet-mounted cam captures image of unknown lifeform. Squad lays down suppressing fire, then withdraws.



DATE: 5 July 2177
Colonial Marines deployed to village pond in Potten End, Herts. Initial sweep finds "things with big eyes". Marines return to USS Sulaco and nuke the site from orbit just to be sure.

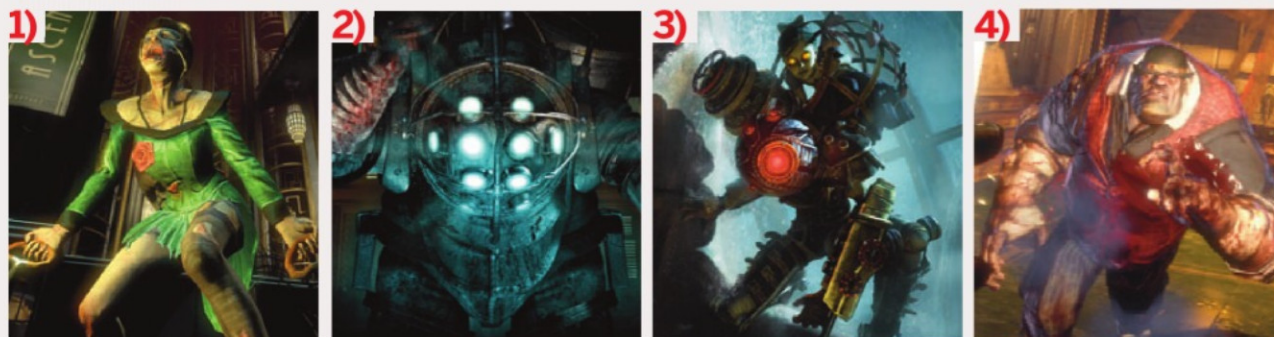


DATE: 30 August 2177
Colonial Marines on leave.

It's the PlayStation quiz so hard that even the Play team can't do it, and they made it in the first place. Good luck, you'll need it...

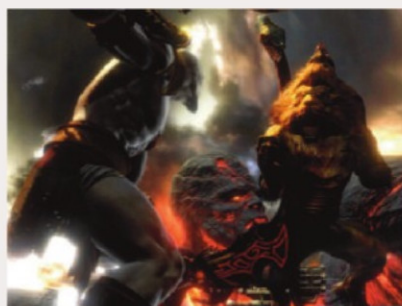
Let's get quizzical!

We're going to keep this simple, just to check if you've been paying attention to BioShock 2. Name these characters:



So, God Of War III, eh? Let's have some questions about that:

- 5) What is it coating Kratos's skin that makes him so pasty?
- 6) Who is the last boss on the original GOW game?
- 7) Whose head does Kratos tear off (that we made him put back on)?
- 8) Which sport for Everybody did Kratos have a brief foray into?



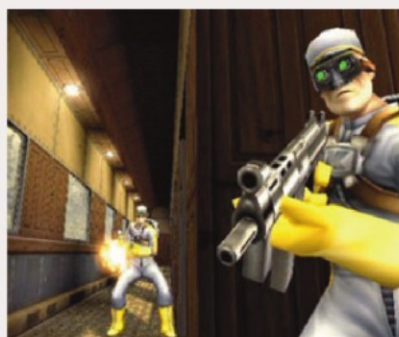
- 9) The Blades of what are the series' trademark weapon?
- 10) How many God Of War games will there be once number three is released?

A bout of nostalgia – all of these answers are related to PSone games available on PSN. Go:

- 11) Originally released on the Amiga, he came to PSone then PSN. He is James Pond...?
- 12) What is the name of Syphon Filter's protagonist?
- 13) What score did we give Final Fantasy VII on its PlayStation Network re-release?
- 14) Which company, since bought out by Sony, created G-Police?
- 15) It's not actually available on the EU PSN, but which game on the US PSN is the sequel to Soviet Strike?

Keeping on a similar, old-school theme, all of the answers to these questions are related to PS2 games we'd like to see re-released, re-imagined or just re-done on PS3:

- 16) Yorda was the protectee in which classic game?
- 17) SSX Tricky was published by which studio?
- 18) Level-5 seems to have moved on to White Knight Chronicles, completely forgetting about which great game (the sequel, not the original)?



- 19) David Jaffe came back on board to create which game (that we never shut up about, seemingly)?
- 20) Free Radical – now Crytek UK – created which great PlayStation 2 series?

So how did you do in our world-famous Play quiz? To those of you who cheated, we've been watching you, and we're not impressed.

Answers on page 97

CULT HEROES

A look back at a bygone age when men were men and games were art. Possibly



Mashed

Stand aside if you're allergic to fun

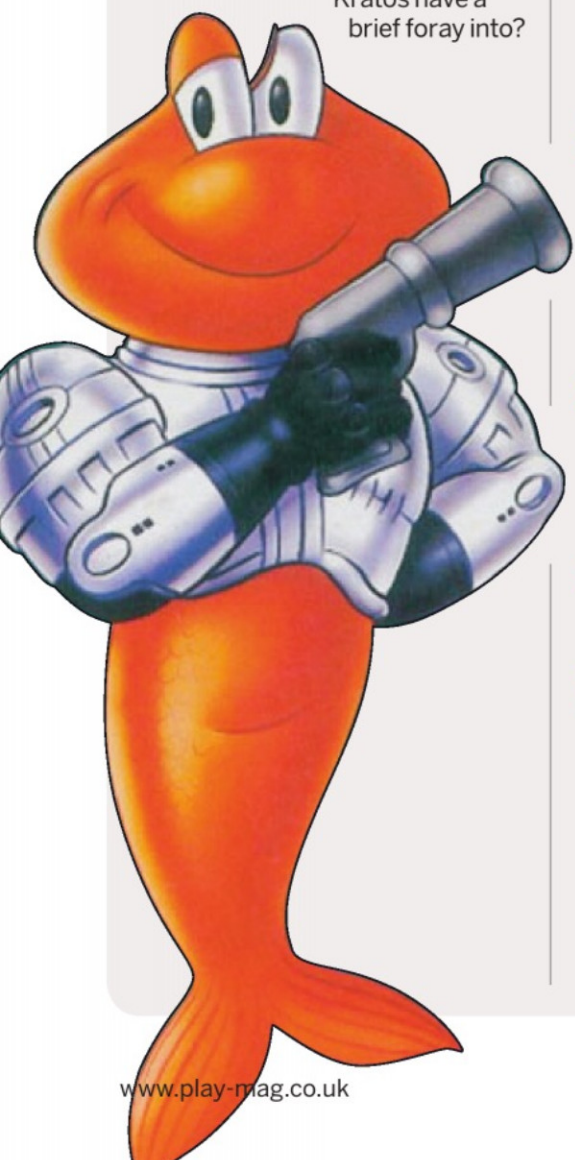
Format: PS2 Released: 2004
Reviewed: 118 Score: 60%

MICRO MACHINES. THERE, it's been said and we don't have bring it up again. That unbelievably addictive multiplayer racing game is why we loved *Mashed* back in the day (not sure about that 60% mark, must have been a bad day for it *in the past*). It was a spiritual successor to one of the most fun multiplayer racing games ever made, developed by the creators of the excellent *Micro Machines 2* who pulled it off with a fair bit of style. So yes, it was a bit derivative, and the single-player mode was fairly easy to ignore, and it felt a bit too expensive at the time. But stick four (slightly inebriated) people in a room with a PlayStation 2, four pads, a multitap (ah, *the past*) and a copy of that game and you had a guaranteed nugget of pure fun ready to be enjoyed for any number of late-night gaming sessions.

It was the simplest of setups – a few cars, some reasonably interesting tracks/obstacle courses, a straightforward race and a whole host of weaponry. That's all you need for a great multiplayer game, and while *Mashed* brought very little new to the table it did what it did very well. Not very good in single-player. Four-player, though: great fun.

The closest we've seen to a new version of *Mashed* was David Jaffe's *Calling All Cars!*. Though it wasn't the most successful title on PSN (its online servers were shut down recently), it did have a market – surely that's something to bear in mind if a certain company were to make a certain style of four-player racing game to be distributed on certain digital distribution channels? Something we've heard is called *Gas: Fuel For Fun?* Yes, we think that could be very good indeed.

Mashed can be had for a matter of pence second-hand, so you have no real excuse.



Heavy Rain

HAVING TROUBLE SOLVING THE CASE OF THE ORIGAMI KILLER? USE THIS HELPFUL MINI-GUIDE THAT DETAILS TIPS ON HEAVY RAIN'S MORE UNIQUE GAMEPLAY FEATURES...

Details

Publisher Sony **Developer** Quantic Dream **Price** £49.99 **Players** 1 **Genre** Adventure **Age Rating** 18 **Website** www.heavyrainps3.com

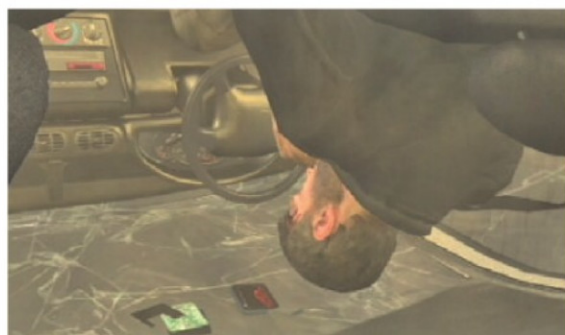
ETHAN'S TRIALS

There are many tense moments in *Heavy Rain*, but it is Ethan Mars' trials to save his son that really provide the most intense scenes. These vary from event to event, however, so we've provided some tips on how best to beat these moments...

THE BEAR

Once Ethan arrives at his destination he's told to drive for five miles up the wrong side of the highway. As you head onto the highway you'll have three types of controls to input: the right stick, motion control or **L2** and **R2**.

When pushing on the right stick, choose either left or right – you don't need to enter both. For the motion controls, make sure you lift the controller in the same direction. After the crash, Ethan will need to collect the clue piece. The button prompts are all inverted now, however, so you'll need to think about each control.



THE BUTTERFLY

Head to the left of the gates until you get to the electrical condensers. Enter the door. Inside, open the door, pick up the matches and climb in.

Keep crawling through the tunnel. When you come to an intersection – and at every intersection

after this – push down on the right stick to strike up a match and follow the flame, which points in the direction of the exit.

Once you're out of the tunnel, regain yourself then slide down the tube. Here you'll need to carefully pass the live electrical condensers. To pass these, you'll need to hold numerous buttons down together and, at some points, tap a certain button as well. Once on the other side, the trial is over.



THE LIZARD

Walk upstairs and smash the ceramic lizards until you find the key that unlocks the door. Activate the video then keep searching the apartment for items to help with the task.

To gain the best solution to this trial you will need to collect a sharp object, a piece of wood (in the main room), a flask of alcohol (in the kitchen), some painkillers (in the bathroom) and the iron rod which you have heated on the kitchen stove. For your



weapon of choice pick something sharp that'll get the job done quickly – we chose an axe, but avoid messy tools like a saw or pliers.

To complete the task, drink an excessive amount of alcohol until the screen is blurred then place

the piece of wood in your mouth. Use your chosen weapon then cauterise the wound with the heated rod and take the painkillers – but do these before collecting the clue.

THE SHARK

Knock on the door then pull the gun out of your pocket. A fight event will occur, so you'll need to be prepared to enter the commands quickly. Watch out for the shotgun, which is usually avoided by pressing **△**.

After the fight you'll burst into his kids' room where the drug dealer will run out of ammo. He will plead with you to not shoot him, and the decision is yours. You can solve the clues without one set of letters, but is it worth it?



THE RAT

The last trial is the simplest and yet the most difficult. Enter the room and view the table where you'll be told you can either choose to drink the poison and die in exactly an hour, or refuse. Refusing means, of course, you don't get the extra letters but if you succeeded in the last four you may have enough to solve the puzzle – but, as with the last trial, is it worth the risk?

Pick up the poison – hold up on the right stick to drink it or push right and spin around to discard it. The choice is yours.





CONTROL THE RAIN

Heavy Rain has a unique method of controls, and one that might not be initially easy to get to grips with. Below are the icons you'll need to know to successfully pass most of the scenes.

MOTION CONTROL – ROTATE

These are rare but usually during times when you need to rotate something on-screen. Holding the pad normally, lift one side of it in the direction required, lowering the opposite. The lifted side needs to move in the direction the icon suggests.



CHARACTER CONTROL

Use **L2** to bring up a list of thoughts going through your character's mind. These may vary according to events in the scene, and can be activated by pressing the corresponding button. To move your character around a scene, hold down **R2** and push the left stick.

LOOKING

At some points you will be able to control the character's vision to see what they can see. Pushing on the left stick will move the camera and highlight different points of interest to interact with.

PRESS

This is the simplest – press the corresponding button on the controller. During action scenes these may have a timer behind the button, so press it as soon as it appears. And they may also come in groups, meaning you need to press any number of them in quick succession.



MOVE

Similar to pressing, this requires you to push the right analogue stick in the required direction. This could be in any direction or requiring you to add a little spin after pushing. Again, these may be accompanied with a timer. If the outline is a dotted line, move the stick slowly and carefully.



HOLD

The triangle above the required button tells you that you need to hold this down. Usually this leads onto additional buttons, but don't let go of the first until it disappears from the queue. Hold it down until the icon fills and it disappears. This can sometimes be combined with tapping.



TAPPING

When the button on screen shakes quickly, you'll need to tap rapidly – usually involved when pushing someone away during an event, if you don't do this quickly enough you will fail it. Tapping can often be required at the end of a series of held buttons as above.



MOTION CONTROL – MOVE

Look at the direction the arrow is pointing in to determine which way you should move the controller. Usually this involves you lifting or lowering the controller sharply, but you sometimes have to move it left or right. When these happen don't twist the controller, simply move it in the required direction, keeping it held safely, of course!



MOTION CONTROL – SHAKE

When the pad icon shakes with up and down arrows you need to shake the controller rapidly. This is similar to tapping in that you need to fill the box quickly to successfully complete it, so use quick, sharp lifting and lowering techniques.



HOW TO GET... NINE BRONZES IN SIX HOURS!

You won't win any Trophies with speed here – they may take you a few hours, but it's how you act that is important to whether you unlock any or not.

GOOD FATHER BRONZE

There is a schedule in Ethan's kitchen that you can check, near a clock to find the time. Complete each item on the list at around the same time that is suggested, then, as you put Shaun to bed, collect his teddy bear from on top of the washing machine in the room next to the kitchen.



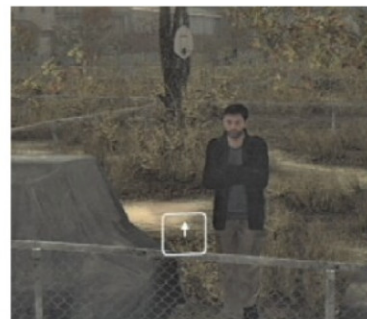
WHITE KNIGHT BRONZE

You can get the Trophy Private Eye here, too. When you speak to Lauren at her flat, convince her to talk then, as you leave, Troy will enter. Follow after him, knock on the door and start a fight with him. With mostly button presses and dodging, it's an easy enough fight to unlock this Trophy.



VIP BRONZE

After Ethan rereads the letter from the Origami Killer, head outside into his backyard and hop over the fence. Exit to the right of the next building and get into your car. This will bypass the journalists who will, otherwise, disturb Ethan as he leaves – but most importantly leave you Trophy-less!



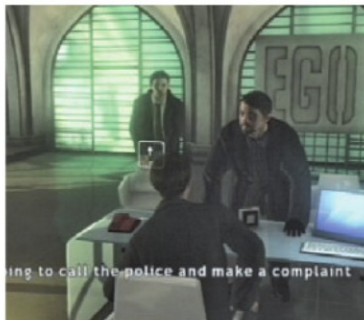
SELF-CONTROL BRONZE

The scene with Jayden and Nathaniel can go one of two ways. Whichever way it goes you get a Trophy – either this or 'Blunder' (also Bronze). Your choices are either to shoot or not to shoot Nathaniel. If you wish to shoot him press **R1**, otherwise ignore that prompt and keep talking to him.



GOOD COP BRONZE

When visiting Ethan's psychiatrist as Agent Jayden, Blake will begin to get aggressive and try to beat the information out of him. Have Jayden intervene, regularly interrupting him until you shout, causing Blake to stop hitting him. Once Blake is stopped, the psychiatrist will talk.



HANDS UP! BRONZE

This Trophy can be unlocked at two points: during the escape through the subway or from the motel room. Have Blake capture you and this will unlock; however, there are also Trophies for escaping both times, too – 'Fugitive' from the subway and 'Escape Master' from the motel.



QUEEN OF ROPES BRONZE

During the scene at the Doc's house, he'll be called to the door before 'operating'. Use the left stick to turn Madison's head to look at each of the ropes she's tied down with – shaking the controller up and down to loosen the binds. Do this quickly then carefully follow each of the commands on screen to escape.



THE CHEF BRONZE

A simple task to unlock this Trophy, but easy to miss. As soon as Lauren goes for a shower, collect the eggs from the fridge and the frying pan from the sink. Follow the commands on screen carefully, making sure not to mess any up. Mix the eggs regularly until you're told that they're ready, then serve it onto the plate.



PRIDE SAVED BRONZE

To unlock this Trophy you'll need to take no more than one item of clothing off. Unbutton the shirt then hold **L2** to bring up Madison's thoughts – select 'Lamp' so she'll initiate a sexy dance that'll give her reach to grab the lamp. Follow the commands to throw it at Paco – successfully saving your pride.



Including: Borderlands, Darksiders, Modern Warfare 2 /// Cheats

THE SECRET VAULT

A post-ironic look at the world of PlayStation cheats and Easter eggs

Borderlands

Barrel blatin' broo-ha-ha



Step 1: Head to Treacher's Landing and make your way southeast, to the secret dock located in the area.



Step 2: Whip out a sniper rifle – you must have plenty – and shoot the barrels you can see in this order: yellow, green, blue, red. Then sit back...



Step 3: Flaming pillars will rise from the water, accompanied by some interesting music. This does nothing in-game, as far as we know.

Darksiders

Wicked kool



Step 1: Do you want to fight the villain Wicked K? Head outside the Twilight Cathedral and use the grapple point on the left to swing across to fight.



Step 2: For a rematch, go to Anvil's Ford. Go to the Choking Grounds tomb, accessed by moving the middle of the three large blocks, for a third brawl.



Step 3: The fourth battle can be had at Drowned Pass, where you'll have completed the Shadow Arena challenge earlier. But watch out – he's hard.

Modern Warfare 2

A bit of a wordy one



Step 1: Go to the Highrise map for a teddybear surprise. Head to the southeast corner and find a half-hanging down window cleaning platform.



Step 2: Run and jump towards the platform, releasing the control stick in the air. Once you're on, look for a ledge on the outside of the building.



Step 3: Head to the other side to a slanted platform. Climb up it then turn left, look up and climb to the roof, and move along the fence to the left to arrive.

LATEST CHEATS

Assassin's Creed II

PS3

These weapons can be unlocked by beating the corresponding bosses in the PSP game *Assassin's Creed Bloodlines*. Once defeated, hook the PSP up to your PlayStation 3 and let it unlock away:



Bouchart's Blade
Defeat Armand Bouchart
Dark Oracle's Bone Dagger
Defeat the Dark Oracle
Fredrick's Hammer
Defeat Fredrick the Red
Mace of the Bull
Defeat the Bull

Maria Thorpe's Longsword

Defeat Maria Thorpe

Twins' Blade

Defeat the Twins

Army Of Two: The 40th Day

PS3

Complete the game and enter the options menu to select the cheats of Big Head mode and Infinite Ammo. You will also unlock a selection of six different costumes to use in the game: Civilian, End Costume, Mall Costume, Light Armor, Medium Armor and Heavy Armor. Simple, and no codes involved.



Guitar Hero: Van Halen

PS3

Enter these button combinations on the cheat menu to unlock the corresponding effects:

Line six in music studio

G, R, Y, B, R, Y, B, G

Always slide

G, G, R, R, Y, R, Y, B

Air instruments

R, R, B, Y, G, G, G, Y

Invisible rocker

G, R, Y, Y, Y, B, B, G

Performance mode

Y, Y, B, R, B, G, R, R

Hyperspeed

G, B, R, Y, Y, R, G, G

Auto Kick

Y, G, R, B, B, B, B, R

Gem Colour

B, R, R, G, R, G, R, Y

Flame colour

G, R, G, B, R, R, Y, B

Star colour

R, R, Y, R, B, R, R, B

Vocal fireball

R, G, G, Y, B, G, Y, G

Always drum fill

R, R, R, B, B, G, G, Y

Black highway

Y, R, G, R, G, R, R, B

Saints Row 2

PS3

What about a classic, pointless cheat for a game that's already mental and fun? Oh go on then.

Type in #20 on your mobile phone to make it literally rain people. Why? We have no idea.

Need it to stop? Then dial #12 and they'll float back up again.



Bayonetta

PS3

If you hold **L1** and **L2** during the whole opening cinematic of chapter VIII or XIV you will unlock the classic versions of the *Afterburner* and *Space Harrier* music. Which is ace.

Also, if you need more time to practice, simply hold **SELECT** during a loading screen to 'lock in' to practice mode. Press **SELECT** again when you want out. Simple.



An alternative opinion about great PlayStation games that doesn't ever reflect the views of Play magazine

それはどのようによかったか。

by Lillian Q Waterbuck

J'accuse!

EVERYBODY'S GOLF: WORLD TOUR

[SONY, PS3, 2008]

The best way to ruin a good sit down

Oh, so it's golf for everybody, is it? If it's golf for everybody, then why do I hate it so much? Eh? Explain that. The front that the *Everybody's Golf* series presents, that it's an accessible golf game that's fun for all the family, is a lie. The truth is it's a golf game for *Street Fighter* players, requiring years of practice and lightning-quick thumb work. Don't believe us? Try playing it online.

While you, assuming you're a normal person, will be getting a

the chat field between holes while everyone else commiserates him. What is this madness? Why is no one accusing him of cheating? Where's the flaming and bickering? It's just not normal.

Basically, we don't know how they're doing it, but it appears to involve much more technique than the two well-timed pushes of the same button we thought golf was supposed to be about. As far as we can tell, so long as you're able to pull off some hugely complex button combo in no more time than it takes your club to

Where's the flaming and bickering? It's just not normal

steady mix of birdies and pars and feeling pretty blummin' proud of yourself to boot, at least one player in your match is going to be getting an eagle on every hole. And if he doesn't then he'll be making a sad face in

swing up then down again, then you can pretty much put the ball exactly where you want every time. What the flip does that have to do with golf?

And another thing, fans of *Everybody's Golf* always say the same thing: "Don't be fooled by the cartoony visuals, it's actually a very realistic simulation." Oh, really? Have you actually played the harder courses? No real-life golf course designer could be that cruel.

There's one hole with a ridiculously



She's sexy, she's French, she looks about ten, she's so wrong on so many levels.



shot as well. Always. If this really is a realistic golf simulation, then these people should have been escorted from the course by security, and I should be able to sack my caddy and replace him or her with one who's had a laryngectomy.



This is the caddy we hate most. Even more than we hate the Scottish sneezy one.

Quiz answers

- 1) Splicer (Spider variety)
- 2) Big Daddy
- 3) Big Sister (and Little Sister)
- 4) Brute
- 5) The ashes of his dead family. Aww
- 6) Ares
- 7) Helios

- 8) Golf
- 9) Athena
- 10) Five (GOW I, II, III, Chains Of Olympus and Betrayal)
- 11) Robocod
- 12) Gabriel Logan
- 13) 96%
- 14) Psygnosis

- 15) Nuclear Strike
- 16) Ico
- 17) EA Sports BIG
- 18) Dark Chronicle
- 19) Twisted Metal: Black
- 20) TimeSplitters

Results:

Add up your correct answers from the Play Quiz then refer to this chart to determine what Greek God you are:

- 0) Ate
- 1-5) Metope
- 6-10) Phoebe
- 11-15) Poseidon
- 16-20) Zeus

PLAY# Playlist

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

PLAY# TOP FIVE COWBOYS (OR GIRLS)

top five KEITH HENNESSEY

- 1 Woody (Toy Story)
- 2 Dallas Cowboys (Madden NFL 2010)
- 3 William Munny (Unforgiven)
- 4 Ethan Edwards (The Searchers)
- 5 Yosemite Sam (Looney Tunes)

top five GAVIN MACKENZIE

- 1 Yosemite Sam (Looney Tunes)
- 2 The Rumpo Kid (Carry On Cowboy)
- 3 Sheriff Bart (Blazing Saddles)
- 4 Texas Pete (Superted)
- 5 The Milky Bar Kid (Milky Bar)

top five JON GORDON

- 1 Stranger (Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath)
- 2 Dallas Cowboys (Madden NFL 2010)
- 3 Red Harlow (Red Dead Revolver)
- 4 Cole White (GUNV)
- 5 Ben Wade (3:10 To Yuma)

top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 Rooster Cogburn (True Grit)
- 2 Stranger (Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath)
- 3 Seth Bullock (Deadwood)
- 4 Billy (Sunset Riders)
- 5 Red Harlow (Red Dead Revolver)

top five ALI INNES

- 1 Bravestarr (Bravestarr)
- 2 The Milky Bar Kid (Milky Bar)
- 3 The Rumpo Kid (Carry On Cowboy)
- 4 The Gunmen of the Apocalypse (Red Dwarf)
- 5 Cole White (GUNV)

top five DAN PEEL

- 1 Marty McFly (Back To The Future III)
- 2 Bill Munny (Unforgiven)
- 3 Yosemite Sam (Looney Tunes)
- 4 The Waco Kid (Blazing Saddles)
- 5 The Milky Bar Kid (Milky Bar)

PS3 LISTING

game	issue	score
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.		
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.		
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue*	183	90%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Damnation	181	38%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Dead Space	172	87%
Demon's Souls	182	91%
Tough and unforgiving, <i>Demon's Souls</i> is nevertheless a breath of fresh air in a very stagnant games market.		
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%

game	issue	score
DJ Hero	186	91%
It's just like playing <i>Guitar Hero</i> for the first time all over again, although <i>DJ Hero</i> is slightly more expensive.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
<i>Fallout 3</i> lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by <i>PES</i> seems like so long ago now.		
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII*	188	79%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.		
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
<i>World Tour</i> just about manages to trump rival <i>Rock Band</i> with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.		
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%

game	issue	score
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.		
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
Iron Man	166	58%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.		
Lair	158	52%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.		
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
MAG	189	68%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, <i>Pacific Rift</i> amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title.		
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Aliens Vs Predator PS3	79%	Undead Knights PSP	46%
Heavy Rain PS3	94%	MAG PS3	68%
BioShock 2 PS3	88%	Peggle PSN	94%
Dante's Inferno PS3	80%	Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond PSN	69%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen PS3	65%	Uno PSN	85%
MX Vs ATV Reflex PS3	68%	Star Trek: D-A-C PSN	57%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce PS3	37%	Vagrant Story PSN	82%
Vancouver 2010 PS3	76%		
TNA Impact! Cross The Line PSP	58%		

game	issue	score
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	186	52%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sega Superstars Tennis	165	68%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%

game	issue	score
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Tekken 6	184	94%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	177	75%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%

game	issue	score
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	157	84%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2010	185	77%
Yakuza 3*	178	82%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%

PS STORE LISTING

1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%

*denotes import review

PS3 top fives

top five FPS



- 1 Modern Warfare 2
- 2 The Orange Box
- 3 Killzone 2
- 4 Unreal Tournament III
- 5 Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

top five RACING



- 1 MotorStorm: Pacific Rift
- 2 Sega Rally
- 3 Colin McRae: DIRT
- 4 Colin McRae: DIRT 2
- 5 Need For Speed ProStreet

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 FIFA 10
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2007
- 4 Fight Night Round 3
- 5 Everybody's Golf World Tour

top five ADVENTURE



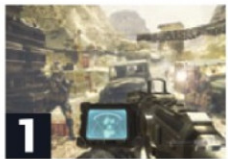
- 1 Grand Theft Auto IV
- 2 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
- 3 Uncharted: Drake's Fortune
- 4 Assassin's Creed II
- 5 Metal Gear Solid 4

top five SHOOT-EM-UP



- 1 The Club
- 2 GRAW 2
- 3 Super Stardust HD
- 4 Everyday Shooter
- 5 Kane & Lynch: Dead Men

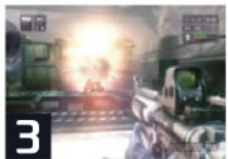
TOP TEN NETWORK GAMES



1 Modern Warfare 2



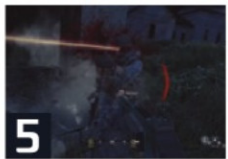
2 LittleBigPlanet



3 Killzone 2



4 Unreal Tournament III



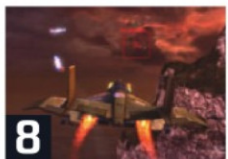
5 Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare



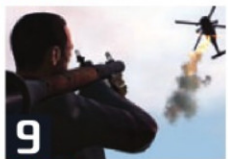
6 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



7 MotorStorm: Pacific Rift



8 Warhawk



9 GTA IV



10 Street Fighter IV

game	issue	score
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Everybody's Golf 2	62	83%
Fade To Black	09	44%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Flock!	179	70%
fiOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
G-Police	27	84%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hyperbolloid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kula World	172	71%
Lemmings	151	79%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition.		
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Motorhead	173	60%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
The second game in the PixelJunk series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!		
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its PixelJunk series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%

game	issue	score
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.		
Snakeball	176	92%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Snake meets Pac-Man meets GoogleMaps. The Last Guy is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipeOut	01	89%
WipeOut HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Worms	179	91%
There's a reason Worms is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.		
Zuma	182	78%

PSP mini LISTING

Alien Havoc	186	68%
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero of Sparta	186	57%
Kahoots	186	88%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
It's like having an Amiga on your PSP, meaning it's brilliant even without the fact that the game is great.		
Puzzle Scape	186	75%
Tetris	186	93%
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vampire	186	67%

game	issue	score
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy	134	44%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, Legends is the best racing game on the PSP.		
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core - Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.		
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
F1 2009	187	66%
F1 Grand Prix	134	81%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld	139	82%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Gripshift	136	81%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
Bar some combat control issues, GTA: Chinatown Wars has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.		



game	issue	score
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
Successfully taking the GTA formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games.		
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Improving on its predecessor in every way, the only way <i>Vice City Stories</i> could be topped is if <i>San Andreas</i> comes to the PSP.		
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.		
LocoRoco	143	94%
We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.		
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our <i>Metal Slug</i> and the <i>Anthology</i> proves to be a great compilation.		
Metal Gear Ac'd 2	138	92%
More excellent card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mullet-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
A proper <i>Metal Gear Solid</i> game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title.		
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	134	57%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%

game	issue	score
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
Need For Speed Most Wanted	136	73%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
The arcade classic comes to PSP and is just as good as it's ever been. The perfect game to play on a rainy Sunday afternoon.		
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoRoLs	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ - Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, <i>Ridge Racer</i> still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.		
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
<i>Unplugged</i> comes highly recommended. It's superb - there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.		
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart. Which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy.		
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights themselves are as hectic and solid as ever. A portable delight.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%

game	issue	score
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
In the absence of a 'real' <i>Metal Gear</i> game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job of it too.		
Syphon Filter: Logan's Shadow	161	84%
Tales Of Eternia	138	85%
Tales Of The World	158	56%
Taito Legends	145	64%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play, <i>Tekken 6</i> is the best game of the series on PSP.		
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
<i>Tekken: Dark Resurrection</i> is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.		
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld <i>WipEout</i> game could be, <i>Pure</i> is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

psp top fives

top five RACING



- 1 Burnout Legends
- 2 Gran Turismo
- 3 Ridge Racer
- 4 WipEout Pure
- 5 Sega Rally

top five SHOOT-'EM-UPS



- 1 Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops
- 2 Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror
- 3 Pursuit Force
- 4 Miami Vice
- 5 Rainbow Six Vegas

top five SPORTS



- 1 Virtua Tennis 3
- 2 Everybody's Golf 2
- 3 FIFA 10
- 4 Football Manager Handheld
- 5 WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010

top five RPG



- 1 Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness
- 2 Crisis Core - Final Fantasy VII
- 3 Tales Of Eternia
- 4 Breath Of Fire 3
- 5 Valkyrie Profile

top five PLATFORM



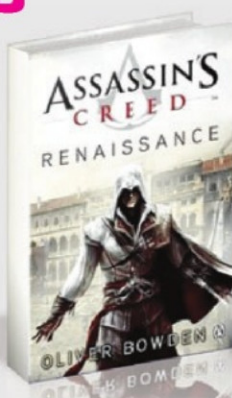
- 1 LocoRoco
- 2 Metal Slug Anthology
- 3 LittleBigPlanet
- 4 Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins
- 5 Me And My Katamari

Play Book Club

Assassin's Creed: Renaissance

Author: Oliver Bowden • RRP: £6.99

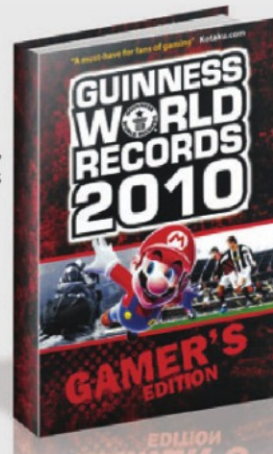
The novelisation of Ubisoft's assassin epic seems a bit frivolous, but it's sure to offer some decent on-the-plane reading for those who want a bit of disposable entertainment. *Renaissance* covers the events of *Assassin's Creed II*, from Ezio's carefree beginnings into his life of clandestine activities. If you go in expecting your life to be changed, you'll be disappointed. If you go in expecting Dan Brown levels of literacy and a reasonably entertaining, though forgettable story you won't be let down.



Guinness World Records Gamer's Edition 2010

Author: Guinness • RRP: £14.99

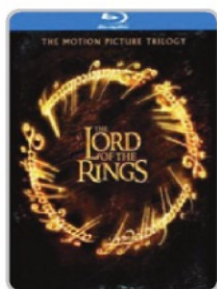
The third in a series of dedicated gaming versions of the *Guinness World Records* titles, this time adding more records, new write-ups of the best games ever and more ridiculous little records. As well as records such as the longest single session on a racing game (25 hours on *Need For Speed: Shift*), there are write-ups for the top ten games of 2009 and the top 50 game series. It's a surprising mix of content, and not just a dispassionate list of random accomplishments. A good coffee table/toilet book.



*denotes import review



Peter Jackson's fantasy trilogy remains a timeless viewing experience.



DETAILS

Price
£74.99
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
Peter Jackson
Starring
Viggo Mortensen,
Ian McKellen,
Elijah Wood

The Lord Of The Rings Trilogy Boxset

Relive the journey in HD

Epic. That pretty much sums up the *Lord Of The Rings* franchise on screen. Over the course of three movies, all released consecutively from 2001 to 2003, the landscape of fantasy cinema has changed forever. Now riding out onto a deluxe Blu-ray boxset, these features are riper than ever for a retrospective review. Not surprisingly, the years have been kind to this trilogy, but that doesn't mean Peter Jackson's series isn't without some chinks in its armour. Book fans will again be reminded how aggrieved they felt

with the liberties Jackson and co took when adapting JRR Tolkien's texts, and *The Return Of The King* still takes bloody ages to end, but nearly ten years on from their release (yes, it has been that long) the films still have the power to inspire awe in a returning fan.

Digging into this boxset, our journey begins with *The Fellowship Of The Ring*, and this is by far the best of the three. *Hobbiton* still glitters in the opening scene (especially in a neat HD transfer), and throughout Frodo's travels across Mirkwood, Rivendell and beyond, there remains a real sense of belonging within the film's cast/fellowship.

Where not conveying the *Empire Strikes Back* murk we were all hoping for back in 2002, *The Two Towers* takes a subtle change in tone that builds towards a grand showdown. This is mostly down to the introduction of complex bad/good guy Gollum, and the motion-capture technology that breathes life into this character,

courtesy of chameleon-like actor Andy Serkis. With the fellowship disbanding then coming together, you can't help but feel immense jubilation during the conclusion of the Battle Of Helm's Deep, and this siege remains one of the series' most impressive moments.

The Return Of The King is a tricky one; on the outset it is a fitting conclusion to the saga, one that is packed with high-octane action (the Battle of the Pelennor Fields is a revelation) and a bit of tragedy to boot. On the downside, this is a film that shamefully has about three endings, all staggered over what feels like a very long time. It was clear that Peter Jackson set out to adapt the *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy with only one agenda: to entertain. In that respect, a strike rate of two out of three is by no means a failure, and these movies rightfully deserve to enter the pantheons of cinema's elite.

Shaun Davis

VERDICT

The *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy is a lovingly created fantasy epic that still has the power to control imaginations on Blu-ray.

RATING: ★★★★★



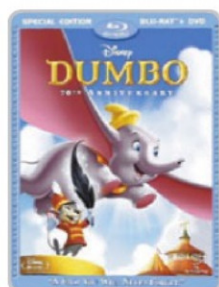
Despite not having the highest of budgets, these movies have some amazing special effects.

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Blu-ray Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Competition



DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
Ben Sharpsteen
Starring
Edward Brophy,
Herman Bing,
Margaret Wright

Dumbo: Special Edition

Elephant antics

DISNEY BLU-RAYS ARE always eagerly awaited; there's just something quite majestic about seeing these classic animated movies rejuvenated in high definition. Like *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs* and *Pinocchio* before it, this special edition release comes with all the bells and whistles we now come to expect from a House of Mouse Blu-ray. But it's the story that people are going to be re-investing in, and thankfully this is as heart-warming as you remember it to be. At a mere 64 minutes long this remains one of Disney's leanest feature films to date, and within its running time viewers are whisked away on an unforgettable adventure.

The film follows the plight of a young elephant – nicknamed Dumbo – born with one heck of a set of ears. Through all of the mocking and oppression he suffers from the other elephants, Dumbo soon realises that his ears gift him the power of flight.



Naturally this sets him on a path to achieving great things. This is a film littered with golden moments, from the humour of Dumbo's birth to his first soar through the skies; this movie still pushes all the right buttons. Sure, the film has dated somewhat (Jim Crow, anyone?) but overall this is a fast and flighty slice of family animation that thoroughly deserves to be screened on next-generation TV screens. **SD**
RATING: ★★★★★



DETAILS

Price
£24.00
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
Kevin Greutert
Starring
Tobin Bell,
Costas Mandylor,
Shawnee Smith

Saw VI

Greed isn't good

NOW ON ITS sixth movie – with a seventh on the way in 3D – the *Saw* franchise is showing no signs of slowing down. Although the horror series has never been regarded as cinema par excellence, there has definitely been a dip in quality over the last couple of movies. Sadly number six does little to buck this trend.

This latest instalment picks up from where its predecessor left off and follows Jigsaw's new protégé, Lieutenant Mark Hoffman, as he sets up a new game. This time, the target is the US health system and the greedy insurers that dictate who should live and die. This plot thread is commendable enough but could have done with being explored further. Instead, director Kevin Greutert's picture is more concerned with bombarding us with back story, flashbacks and annoying tone shifts. The central game is engaging enough, and sees a greedy health insurance exec making some painful choices, but like its predecessors this movie fails in presenting us with anything fresh.



Gore fans will of course be more interested in the film's bloodletting than anyone else, and scenes including hydrochloric acid injections, shotgun roundabouts and a self-amputation will not disappoint. Like all *Saw* movies the finale smacks you with some new revelations, none of which leave you eager to see the next instalment in the franchise. Here's hoping three dimensions can give this rusty machine a little bit more juice. **SD**
RATING: ★★★★★



Win copies of The Lord Of The Rings Boxset on Blu-ray

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to win stuff

TO CELEBRATE THE home entertainment release of *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy boxset, **Play** has teamed up with Entertainment In Video to offer five lucky readers the chance to win a copy of this trilogy on Blu-ray.

To be in with a chance of winning this great prize, all you'll need to do is answer this simple question:

What is the name of the book that precedes *The Lord Of The Rings*?

- a) The Hobbit
- b) The Habit
- c) The Hat



To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'The Lord Of The Rings competition'. The closing date for entries is 18 April 2010. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified.

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It's the end of the world as we know it, but we don't feel fine.



DETAILS

Price
£24.99
Sound
DTS-HD 5.1
Director
Roland Emmerich
Starring
John Cusack,
Chiwetel Ejiofor,
Thandie Newton

2012

Crash, bang but no wallop

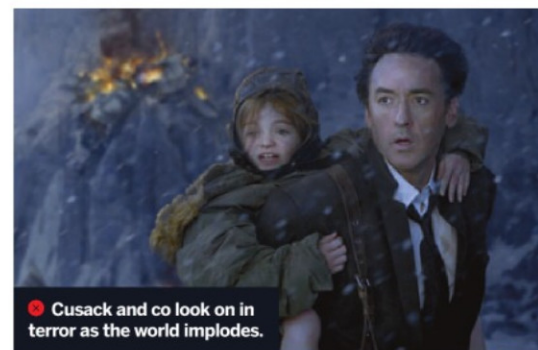
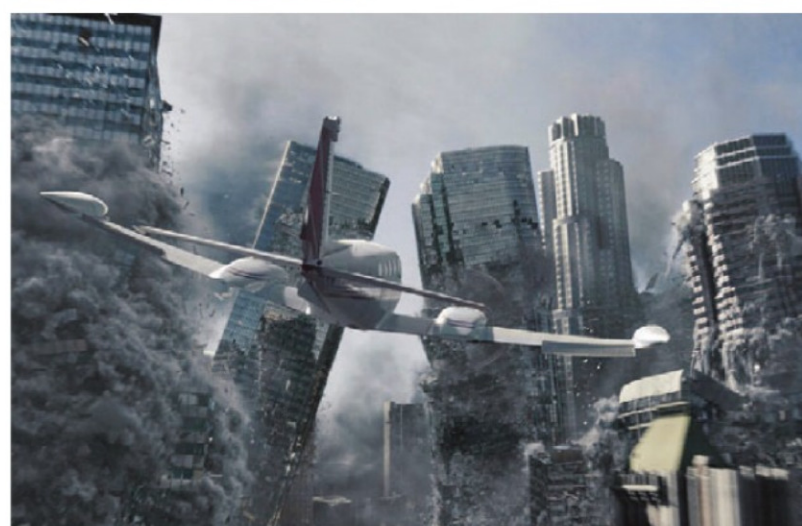
Not content with deploying aliens on our planet (*Independence Day*), mutant lizards (*Godzilla*) and Mother Nature herself (*The Day After Tomorrow*), Roland Emmerich has gone all out with his latest movie, and presented us with a future where the world itself is imploding. The date for this destruction is, not surprisingly, the year 2012.

At a hefty 158 minutes, this is Emmerich's slowest-paced film to date. The first hour is pretty much dedicated to establishing the key characters, and in Chiwetel Ejiofor's smart scientist and John Cusack's struggling divorcee we have some believable chaps to root for. Just before tedium starts to creep in, Emmerich hits us with the first wave of destructive action where, following many ignored warnings and governmental pondering, the Earth's core gets hotter than hell and takes out the US west coast. This, like all the other set pieces that follow, is a guilty pleasure. With reason thrown out the window you can only look on in awe as Cusack and his family charge through a crumbling California in a limousine. It's bombastic but kind of brilliant. The computer effects are not the

most realistic ever to be presented on screen, but there's no knocking the physics conveyed in moments like this.

As the film progresses there are dips where the pace slows and predictability unfortunately sets in. These are thankfully interrupted by yet more cataclysmic events, and the previously mentioned escape from California is topped by a tidal wave crashing through Washington DC.

The problem that resides with this film, however, is the fact that you never feel a sense of danger, or even immediacy. Even when the film's main characters touch down in China you already suspect that they will reach their target destination. This too goes for the action, where the people who should worry about certain death are the minor characters. Other gripes include some odd casting (Woody Harrelson turns in his oddest performance to date) and the fact that a young boy called Noah features in a film that also has a giant ark in it. It's faux pas like that, which sap away the believability of a film really



Cusack and co look on in terror as the world implodes.

intent on making us engage with its real-life warning message. But for thrills, spills and only the occasional bellyache, this is blockbuster cinema just about recommendable on Blu-ray.

Shaun Davis

VERDICT

Featuring large-scale action, a believable(ish) plot and only the occasional meander into the mundane, 2012 is passable popcorn viewing.

RATING: ★★★★★

UK Top 5

- 1 Pandorum**
This sci-fi space horror has defied critics and become a hit on Blu-ray.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 2 The Hurt Locker**
This Iraq-set war film packs a visceral punch on the high-definition format.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 3 Ong Bak 2: The Beginning**
Ong Bak 2: The Beginning packs a strong punch on BD.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 4 District 9**
Blending sci-fi smarts and constructive action, this underdog hit is a recommended purchase.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 5 Halo Legends**
As far as spin-off movies go this is somewhat middling. For fans of the franchise.
RATING: ★★★★★

US Top 5

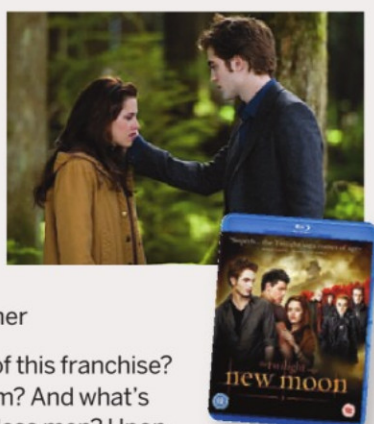
- 1 Zombieland**
This Blu-ray is packed full of scares, laughs and plenty of insane gore.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 2 2012**
Bring the disaster home on Blu-ray and you may find yourselves slightly underwhelmed.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 3 Boogie Nights**
Paul Thomas Anderson's trawl of the Seventies porno scene is required viewing. Buy it now.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 4 Law Abiding Citizen**
Gerald Butler and Jamie Foxx do a lot of scowling in this average crime flick.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 5 Halloween II**
Rob Zombie further proves his ineptitude to create a decent slasher with this trash sequel.
RATING: ★★★★★

Top 5 Fantasy

- 1 The Lord Of The Rings Trilogy**
Bringing this trilogy home will not disappoint. Epic in every sense.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 2 Pan's Labyrinth**
Guillermo Del Toro works his sinister magic with this unique – and very adult – genre picture.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 3 Labyrinth**
Featuring David Bowie and puppetry from Jim Henson this is a nostalgic treat for fantasy fans.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 4 Bridge To Terabithia**
Buy this movie and you are sure to get lost in its lush animation and pleasant story.
RATING: ★★★★★
- 5 Stardust**
This Neil Gaiman-adapted movie is a visual treat with a savvy story to match.
RATING: ★★★★★

The Twilight Saga: New Moon

PRICE: £24.99
SOUND: DTS-HD 5.1
DIRECTOR: Chris Weitz
STARRING: Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Taylor Lautner



WHAT IS THE appeal of this franchise? Why is everyone so glum? And what's the deal with all the topless men? Upon watching this second entry in the *Twilight* saga none of the above questions will be answered, but for all its faults this sequel just about trumps its predecessor. Amid all the moping there is some good action and a trip to Italy yields a tense finale. **SD**
RATING: ★★★★★

The House Of The Devil

PRICE: £19.99
SOUND: DTS-HD 5.1
DIRECTOR: Ti West
STARRING: Jocelin Donahue, Tom Noonan, Mary Woronov



MARKING HIMSELF OUT as an exciting new prospect, director Ti West scored a major hit on the festival circuit with this retro horror picture. Set in the Eighties, the film tracks Jocelin Donahue's skint teenager as she takes a babysitting job at a creepy mansion. West is clearly in love with his subject matter, and despite this movie not being totally original, horror fans will get a kick out of the subtle pacing and the hard-hitting climax. **SD**
RATING: ★★★★★

Triangle

PRICE: £24.99
SOUND: DTS-HD 5.1
DIRECTOR: Chris Smith
STARRING: Melissa George, Liam Hemsworth, Rachael Carpani



TRIANGLE IS THE type of film that exceeds expectations. On the outset it has the makings of a typical slasher picture. But right from the opening scene you gauge that this is something different. As the film's core characters find themselves marooned aboard an ancient ocean liner, a nautical nightmare unfolds which takes viewers through alternate timelines. As intelligent thrillers go *Triangle* is a voyage worth taking. **SD**
RATING: ★★★★★

Ong Bak: The Beginning

PRICE: £22.99
SOUND: DTS-HD 5.1
DIRECTOR: Tony Jaa
STARRING: Tony Jaa, Sorapong Chatree, Saranyu Wongkrachang



IN ALL HONESTY, *Ong Bak: The Beginning* has pretty much nothing in common with its predecessor. Directed by Tony Jaa, this origin picture focuses on a young warrior named Tien as he embarks on a quest to take down some nasty slave traders. The original *Ong Bak* had more going for it in terms of story structure, but this sequel does feature a final battle that will amaze. **SD**
RATING: ★★★★★

HD Reviews TVs and sound systems that'll make your gaming come to life



Marantz BD7004

PRICE: £700.00
PROFILE: 2.0

AS FAR AS top-end Blu-ray players go, this offering from Marantz is a highly impressive machine. Naturally this model boasts a 2.0 Profile specification, and along with this lucky owners will also be able to enjoy internet connectivity, 7.1-channel analogue outputs and DivX HD playback. These elements and a few others render this to be a great all-rounder. Despite falling short at one frustrating hurdle – why no built-in memory? – this player is well worth paying that little bit extra for.
★★★★★



Toshiba BDX2000

PRICE: £200.00
PROFILE: 2.0

NOW HERE'S AN interesting one. Following the company's failure to conquer during the HD DVD/Blu-ray format war, Toshiba has almost gingerly unveiled its first Blu-ray Disc player. Overall Toshiba's efforts are commendable; this is a cost-effective and basic model, but it's one that does the job. Toshiba could have easily ploughed its cash into trying to top Sony with an all-singing, all-dancing model, but instead it has gone with this underdog player. A great device for first-time Blu-ray player buyers.
★★★★★



LG HB354BS

PRICE: £400.00
PROFILE: 2.1

THIS PROFILE 2.1 Blu-ray system from LG gives buyers a lot for their money. The player itself is solid, and has the power to convey strong, seamless picture quality. To support this device's high-def audio capabilities are some perfectly adequate speakers and a booming subwoofer. Due its compact size LG's rig can fit practically anywhere around the home.
★★★★★

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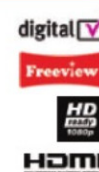
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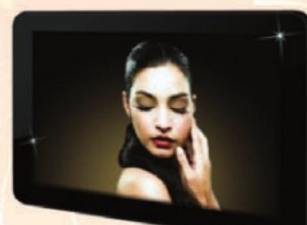
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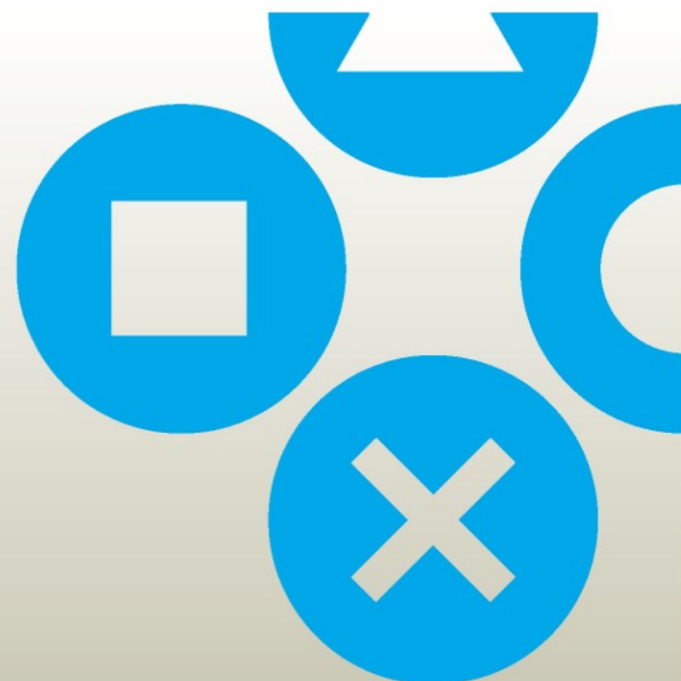
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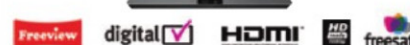
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Back Page Free game demo!

WAG

SHOPPING SPREE TO THE WORLD CUP 2010

IN A COMPLETELY unannounced, unconfirmed and fictional move, Zipper Interactive has jumped on the football World Cup gravy train by obtaining the licence to produce the official game of the England squad's wives and girlfriends – 'WAG'.

In this demo, you'll learn how to customise the loadout of your WAG in order to best equip her to go on a huge football-funded shopping spree along with 255 other WAGs. Which combination of expensive earrings, dress, handbag and shoes by designers you've never heard of because you're poor will work best depends on your playing style and your role within your WAG platoon. So, experiment with different combinations and find out what works best for you...



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